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THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

CONCERNING

THE SACRAMENTS

AND THE POINTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

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BY

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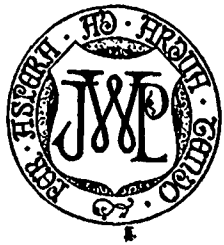

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PREFACE.

THIS Tract contains the substance, in an abridged form, of two Charges, treating, respectively, of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are, now, nearly, if not entirely, out of print. And publications have appeared, professedly in answer to what I have there said, but containing utter misrepresentations of it, either from inattention, or from sophistical design. I have thought it due therefore to those who wish to know the truth, to put it in their power to form a fair judgment.

As it was not my design to bring forward any novel views, but to set forth, as plainly as possible, and to support by Scripture-proofs, what I conceive to be the teaching of our Church and of its most

approved Ministers, I have taken the liberty of quoting largely from the Writings of some well-known Divines. Not that our Church is—as a Church—responsible for what is said by individual members of it; or that either it, or they, have any claim to infallibility. But some degree of deference is certainly due to the judgments of those who are generally regarded as pious and sound Divines; especially when treating of matters concerning which there have been recent controversies, when what they have said was written long before those controversies had arisen. Even those who may not agree with them, and with me, will at least see that there is no *novelty* in the doctrines maintained.

And, in referring to our Formularies, I have considered not only the deference due to such men as our Reformers, but also the obligation lying on Ministers and other members of the Church, to interpret its words fairly, as long as they remain in

connexion with it, and to abstain from torturing its language into a non-natural sense, at variance with the manifest and known intention of the authors. And most especially should those who the most vehemently denounce persons of an opposite party for this disingenuous procedure, set an example themselves (which unhappily many of them have not done) of fairness of interpretation, and honest conformity to the decisions of the Church.

To Scripture, however, the ultimate appeal must be made, as the only infallible guide; and I have endeavoured in this Tract to put forward, as plainly as possible, what appears to me a most important principle in the interpretation of Scripture: namely, not to be satisfied with any sense whatever that the words can be brought to bear, but to seek for that in which they were originally designed and believed to be understood.

In interpreting the Sacred Writers, generally, and not least in deciding whether

some passage is to be *taken literally, or figuratively,* it is evidently of the first importance to look to the meaning which the expression appears to have conveyed, at the time, *to the persons addressed.* This will not always be what might appear to *us,* in a distant Age and Country, the most obvious sense. But whatever sense the words conveyed to the hearers, we may fairly presume to be the true one, unless some correction was furnished (either immediately or afterwards) of any mistake into which they might have fallen. For we can hardly suppose that the inspired Writers were not aware in what sense they would be understood by those they addressed, or that they would knowingly leave them in error, at least on any point of practical importance.

When, for instance, our Lord spoke of Lazarus "sleeping," He was understood at the moment to be speaking literally; and He thereupon explained Himself. On the other hand, when He spoke of his

own "death and resurrection," the Disciples thought He must be speaking figuratively, because the literal fulfilment of his words was utterly at variance with all their expectations. But the *event* shortly after removed their mistake.

Again, when Jesus spoke of "rebuilding this Temple in three days," some may have understood Him at the time to be speaking of the literal Temple: but we find that his Disciples, after the resurrection, had learned the right meaning of his words.

So, also, the prophecy of his "coming in his kingdom," before the end of the existing generation, seems to have been understood by many as relating to the end of the World: and this belief seems to be alluded to by the Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians. But this misapprehension would cure itself, by the mere circumstance of men's seeing that the World did *not* come to an end.

In all cases, then, we may consider that

there is a strong presumption, where nothing appears to the contrary, that *the sense in which a passage of Scripture, relating to any important matter, was understood at the time, is the true sense of it.*

CONTENTS.

Part I.

ON BAPTISM.

PAGE

§ 1. Verbal Controversy 3
2. Points of agreement between those at variance in expression 9
3. Points of disagreement, not verbal . . . 12
4. Archbishop Sumner's opinions on these points 16
5. Probable origin of the rejection of the Sacraments 21
6. Practice of the Apostles 31
7. How the Apostles must have been understood by Jewish converts 35
8. Analogy of the Mosaic Law 40
9. Language of our Reformers 45
10. Confirmation, the sequel to one Sacrament and the introduction to the other . . . 54
NOTE.—Extracts from Bishop Ryder, Mr. Simeon, and Archbishop Sumner 58

Part II.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

§ 1. Deficient attendance at the Lord's Table . 71
2. Superstitious notions respecting the Eucharist 73
3. Neglect by Protestants of a known duty . 79
4. Erroneous views respecting the Eucharist to be met by appeal to Scripture . . . 81

PAGE

§ 5. Alleged miracle of transubstantiation, a contrast to those recorded in Scripture . 85
6. Right principle of interpretation of Scripture 87
7. Test of literal or figurative interpretation . 90
8. Errors concerning the Eucharist, not sprung from erroneous interpretation of Scripture 92
9. Reaction in favour of blind acquiescence in groundless claims 95
10. Ambiguity of the word "mystery" . . . 102
11. Sacrificial character of the Death of Christ, indicated by the Eucharist 105
12. Attempts to explain away the doctrine of the Atonement 108
13. Danger of rash attempts at explanation . . 111
14. Faith shown by contented ignorance of divine mysteries 115
15. Abraham's faith to be imitated 118
16. Practical faith, in reference to the Eucharist 123
17. Natural and Positive Duties 125
18. Groundless scruples 128
19. Connexion of Confirmation with the Eucharist 133

PART I.

ON BAPTISM.

ON BAPTISM.

§ 1. It is not my design to enter on a full discussion of all the questions that have so long agitated the Church, on the subject of Regeneration, and those connected with that. But there is one circumstance pertaining to them which it is most important to point out, and to insist on: which is, that among many persons (I do not say *all*) who are, in language, very much opposed to each other on this subject, the opposition is much greater in appearance than in reality. They are engaged, without being aware of it, in a controversy chiefly, if not altogether, *verbal*. *Verbal Controversy.*

Now it must be regarded by all who have anything of a genuine christian spirit, as a most desirable object to obviate as far as possible all unnecessary dissen-

sion among Christians, and to bring to a mutual good understanding, as nearly as can be done without compromise of truth, all "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

For, besides the immediate evils to those who are themselves engaged in any controversy, there is this additional danger also to the christian People generally, that many of them may be disposed to say "Here are questions which are declared by all to be of vital importance, yet on which the most learned Divines are not agreed. If men apparently pious, and of far greater knowledge and ability than ours, find so much difficulty in agreeing as to the sense of Scripture on points which they regard as of vital importance, what is, to them, a difficulty must be to us an impossibility; and Scripture can therefore contain no *Revelation*, properly so called; or at least no revelation to the mass of mankind." And the result of these reflections will often be, that some will betake themselves to some supposed infallible Church, or other guide, to whose dictates they will implicitly resign them-

selves; while others will be, by the same course, led into infidelity.* They see that there *is* no infallible, and universally accessible, guide on earth; and moreover, that if there were, it could not possibly be *ascertained*, by men incompetent (by supposition) to exercise their private judgment, and who consequently could never have any good reason for trusting their judgment to decide rightly that most difficult question,—*who* is the appointed guide? and they consequently reject the belief of any divine revelation all.

It is doubly important therefore to point out—where this can be done with truth—how far difficulties and disputes may have been created, or aggravated, by Theologians themselves; either from their seeking to explain more than God has thought fit to reveal,† or from interpreting Scripture according to the technical phraseology of some theological school, or from overlooking variations in the senses

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* See *Sermon on the Search after Infallibility*, and *Lessons on Religious Worship*, L. VI.

† See *Sermon on the "Shepherds at Bethlehem,"* and also *Lessons on Religious Worship*, L. VII.

in which several words are employed, and thus introducing undetected verbal controversy, and consequent confusion of thought.

The terms "regenerate" and "regeneration" [or New-birth] are commonly employed (as I have remarked in a Work which has been now for many years well known to the Public) in different senses by different persons.* "Regeneration" denotes, in the language of some, merely that *admission* to christian privileges and advantages which is the necessary *preliminary* to a christian life. Others employ the term to signify the condition into which a man is brought by that *use* of those advantages and privileges which constitutes a decided christian character. And "regenerate," accordingly, is applied by those persons respectively, to conditions as widely different as that of a new-born infant, and that of a fully-formed adult.

Without attempting to enter on a minute discussion of all the modifications

* *Logic*, Appendix: Article, "Regeneration."

of meaning that have ever been attached to these words, we may at least recognize the actual employment of them in the two widely-different senses just mentioned. And not only by different persons, but sometimes even by the same, these words (as well as several others) will be found to be occasionally used with different significations. Undesignedly, and unconsciously, a person will sometimes, even at a short interval, slide from one meaning to another, of some of the expressions he is employing.

Now whatever may be the importance of adhering to the most correct use of any term, and whichever may be, in this case, the more correct, it is surely the first point—the first in order, and the first also in importance—to perceive distinctly the ambiguity that does actually exist, and to keep clear of the many injurious misapprehensions which may arise from attributing to those who use a term in one sense, conclusions which depend on its being taken in a different sense.

For example, a person may be exposed to a groundless imputation of leading

men into a vain and dangerous reliance on baptismal privileges, and of teaching them that all who have been duly baptized are in a safe state; when perhaps in fact he may have never said or implied any such thing, but may have merely been employing the word "regenerate" according to what *he* regards as the most scriptural usage; and then, has had imputed to him inferences which *would* have followed if he had employed that word in quite another sense. And perhaps it may turn out on calm investigation, that such a person, and some who had been at first disposed very strongly to censure him, do not in reality disagree to any considerable extent, as to the substance of the doctrines they maintain.

I have seen something like the above imputation thrown out in a Work which several years ago obtained considerable popularity. It was professedly a description (veiled under a slight tale) of various prevailing religious opinions and modes of conduct: and some of the pictures drawn were both striking and just. But among others, a careless clergyman is

introduced deprecating any anxiety felt by any of his people as to their spiritual state, and saying that "of course all Christians will be saved; and whoever is baptized is a Christian." Now I feel certain, from long experience and attentive observation, that there is no ground whatever for the imputation here conveyed. I mean, that it is not true (as is evidently designed to be implied) that there exists any party, school, or class of men, among our Clergy,—even the worst of them—who teach such a doctrine. Yet it is probable that the representation was not a designed calumny, but was merely an "idle word," originating in a misconception such as I have been alluding to, as the result of a hasty and inconsiderate interpretation of another's expressions, and of rash inferences therefrom.

Points of agreement between those at variance in expression.

§ 2. Let any one then but consider—and this is an inquiry well-becoming those who would cherish a spirit of christian charity—how much there may be of agreement, and that, on the most essential

practical points, between men who, at the first glance might appear widely opposed, and who perhaps are inclined to think hardly of each other.

Two persons accustomed to employ, respectively, the word "regeneration" in the different senses just alluded to, may agree in reverencing the Rite of Baptism, and in administering it according to the same rules: both may be also accustomed to warn men against placing an indolent confidence in Gospel-privileges, and to teach them that to have been enrolled as members of Christ's Church is an advantage for the use of which we are responsible, and which will but increase the condemnation of such as do not "walk worthy of their vocation." Both may teach that (in the words of our 16th Article) "after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin; and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives."*

* Some Divines of the present day (professedly of our Church) express doubts, nearly, if not completely, amounting to a denial of the doctrine of this Article; teaching that sins committed after Baptism are either

And they may agree in teaching that "God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; and in exhorting every one who does live a careless, an irreligious, or a vicious life, to repent, and seek divine mercy through Christ, and strength to accomplish a thorough reformation: though, in many instances, to the same sort of change which the one of these instructors would call "regeneration" or "new-birth," the other might apply the terms "conversion," "revival," "renewal," &c. Both might agree in teaching that a holy life is the test of

totally unpardonable, or are to be atoned for by Penance. Should such views prevail, they may be expected to lead first to a rejection of infant baptism, and afterwards to the practice (not unfrequent in the early Church) of deferring Baptism to the death-bed.

It would be thought by many a cruelty to place a person *without his own consent*, and in unconscious infancy, in a situation, so far, much more disadvantageous than that of those brought up Pagans, that if he did ever—suppose, at the age of fifteen, or twenty—fall into any sin, he must remain for the rest of his life—perhaps for above half a century—deprived of all hope, or at least of all confident hope, of restoration to the divine favour; shut out from all that cheering prospect which, if his baptism in infancy *had been omitted*, might have lain before him.

effectual, profitable regeneration, and in exhorting all men to lead such a life. On this—the important practical point,—they would not differ at all.

Now if this be so, it cannot but be desirable that men should be at least guarded against supposing themselves (through the influence of the language they employ) to be *more* at variance than they really are. And it is accordingly a point of christian duty, when any such occasion arises, to point out the danger of such an error, and thus to promote reconcilement, or at least mitigate hostility, between those engaged in any controversy.

Points of disagreement not verbal.

§ 3. But though some are liable to be engaged (in reference to these points) in a controversy chiefly verbal, there are others, as was above hinted, between whom an apparently similar controversy will be found to turn on a real opposition of doctrine.

Those who hold that (1) of persons duly admitted into the visible Church by baptism, some are, by an absolute eternal

divine decree, secured in all the benefits of Christ's redemption, and others, totally excluded therefrom by the same decree, and moreover (2) that this is a truth *set forth in Scripture* as an essential point of faith;* these, and the parties opposed to them, must, of course, differ, not in words only, but in the matter of their teaching.

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* These two points—(1) the *existence* of such decrees, and (2) the *teaching* of them as an essential part of the *Gospel-revelation*—are quite distinct, though often confounded together. Calvin, and many others, both before and after his time, maintained both. And it is utterly improper that any should be called, either by themselves, or by others, "Calvinists," who dissent from any part of what Calvin himself insisted on as a necessary portion of his theory. "Many," says he, "as if wishing to remove odium from God, while they admit *election*, yet deny *reprobation;* but in this they speak ignorantly and childishly; since election itself could not be maintained except as contrasted with reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts as children, for salvation. Those therefore whom He passes by, He condemns; and that, for no cause whatever, except that He chuses to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestinates for his children." And again, shortly after, he says, "Whence comes it that so many nations, with their infant children, should be sentenced irremediably to eternal death, by the fall of Adam, except that such was God's will?" * * * "The Decree is, I confess, a horrible one," &c.—Calvin, *Inst.* L. iii. c. xxiii. § 7.

Taking Regeneration to imply (as is generally agreed) *some* kind and degree of benefit—some spiritual gift, or at least *offer* of a gift—they of course deny the term "regenerate" to be at all applicable to those Christians whom they consider as excluded by the decree of Omnipotence from all spiritual benefit whatever of Baptism. And the Visible Church, into which members are through this Rite admitted, they must regard as a community not possessing any spiritual endowments whatever; these being, by divine decree, reserved for certain individuals arbitrarily selected from the rest.

Of those who maintain—or at least in their teaching imply—the predestinarian views now alluded to, a considerable portion belong to the Sect which altogether rejects Infant-baptism. And in this I cannot but admit that they are perfectly consistent. Regarding the Rite of Baptism as "an outward and visible *Sign* of an inward spiritual grace" they deem it not allowable, I apprehend, to "put asunder what God has joined together;" and therefore confine the administration of this

sign to those respecting whom there is some presumption at least, of their being admitted to a participation in *the thing signified*—the divine grace; which grace, they hold, is, by an eternal absolute decree, bestowed on one portion of those professing Christianity, and denied to the rest. And to which of the two classes any individual *infant* belongs, there cannot possibly be any ground for even the slightest conjecture.

In the case of an Adult they *can* have, it is supposed, (just as in the case of the other Sacrament, the Lord's Supper)—if not a complete and certain knowledge whether he belongs to the Class of the Elect or the Non-elect,—at least some indication from his professions and his conduct; indications which an infant, of course, cannot afford. And they accordingly consider, I apprehend, that Baptism administered to infants cannot be a Sign of Regeneration, since there cannot be even any presumption of its being accompanied by any spiritual advantage at all.

And certainly it must be admitted that according at least to the ordinary use of

language, a *Sign* of anything is understood to be such, from its being regularly accompanied by that thing of which it is a sign, or at least, by some reasonable presumption of its presence. When, for instance, we speak of a certain dress or badge being a sign of a man's belonging to a certain Regiment, or Order of Knighthood, or the like, we understand that it is to be something *peculiarly* belonging to them, and serving to distinguish them from others. If a dress, or badge, were worn indifferently by an indefinite number of persons, some belonging to this Regiment or Order, and some not, we should consider that it had ceased to be a *sign* at all, having no longer any *signification*. It is on these grounds, I conceive, that many of those who hold that doctrine of absolute decrees I have been alluding to, adhere to, or have joined, the communion of those calling themselves, and commonly called, Baptists.

Archbishop Sumner's opinions on these points.

§ 4. In reference to the subject here treated of, I take the liberty of extracting a passage from a Work which has been for many

years well known, and highly esteemed, by the Public.

"Another practical evil of the doctrine of special grace, is the necessity which it implies of some test of God's favour, and of the reconcilement of Christians to Him, beyond and subsequent to the covenant of baptism. St. Paul, it has been seen, insists upon the necessity of regeneration: he declares that 'the natural man *receiveth not the things of God, neither can know them:*' he calls the heathen nations '*children of wrath,*' and '*sinners of the Gentiles:*' he speaks of the '*old man* as *being corrupt* according to the deceitful lusts:' in short, he expresses, under a variety of terms,* the assertion of our Saviour, that 'except a man be born again, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' John iii. 3.

"With equal clearness he intimates, that the Christians he addresses *were* thus regenerate: as having '*put off the old man* with its deeds;' and having become the 'temple of the *Holy Ghost,*' and 'the

* Rom. ii. 6, &c.

members of Christ;' as having the '*spiritual circumcision*, and being *buried* with Christ *in baptism;'* Rom. vi. 3; Col. ii. 12; as having '*received the spirit of adoption*,' Rom. viii. 15; and as 'being *washed, sanctified, and justified*, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' To the Galatians, 'bewitched,' as he says they were, 'that they should not obey the truth,' he still writes, 'Ye are the *children of God* by faith in Christ Jesus.' For, as many of you as *have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*' Gal. iii. 26. These addresses and exhortations are founded on the principle that the disciples, by their dedication to God in baptism, had been brought into a state of reconcilement with Him, had been admitted to privileges which the Apostle calls on them to improve. On the authority of this example, and of the undeniable practice of the first ages of Christianity, our Church considers Baptism as conveying regeneration, instructing us to pray, before baptism, that the infant 'may be *born again*, and made an heir of everlasting salvation;' and to return thanks, after

baptism, 'that it *hath* pleased God to *regenerate* the infant with his Holy Spirit, and receive him for his own child by adoption.'

"But, on the contrary, if there is a distinction between special and common grace, and none are regenerate but those who receive special grace, and those only receive it who are elect; baptism is evidently no sign of regeneration, since so many after baptism live profane and unholy lives, and perish in their sins. Therefore, the preacher of special grace must, consistently with his own principles, lead his hearers to look for some new conversion, and expect some sensible regeneration. This brings him to use language in the highest degree perplexing to an ordinary hearer. To take an example from the same writer, whose only fault is the inconsistency to which he is reduced by his attachment to the system of election: 'The best duties of unregenerate men are no better in God's account and acceptance, than abomination. There is nothing that such men do, in the whole course of their lives, but at the last day it will be found in God's register-book, among the catalogue

of their sins. This man hath prayed so often, and heard so often; made so many prayers, and heard so many sermons, and done many good works; but yet, all this while, he was in an unconverted estate: these, therefore, are set down in God's day-book in black; and they are registered among those sins that he must give an account for: not for the *substance of the actions* themselves, but because they come from rotten principles, that defile the best actions which he can perform.'*

"Suppose this language addressed now, as it was originally, to a congregation dedicated to Christ in baptism. What would be the feelings of a plain understanding, or a timid conscience, unable to unravel the windings of these secret things, on learning that the sinfulness or innocency of actions does not depend upon their being permitted or forbidden in the revealed law, but on the doer being in a regenerate or unregenerate state at the time when he performs them? How is this fact of *regeneracy*, upon which no less

* Hopkins *on the New Birth.*

than eternity depends, to be discovered? The Apostle enumerates the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit; but his test is insufficient, for the two lists are here mixed and confounded. The hearers appeal to the Church, an authorized interpreter of Scripture. The Church acquaints them, that they were themselves regenerated, and made the children of grace, by the benefit of baptism; while the preacher evidently treats them as if it were possible they might be still unregenerate."*

Probable origin of the rejection of the Sacraments.

§ 5. It seems not unlikely that the same cause which had probably led to the rejection of infant baptism, contributed also to the formation of that Sect which rejects the Sacraments altogether. At the time when that Sect arose, a very large proportion of christian ministers, while they were administering to infants a Rite which they spoke of as a sign of Regeneration, (or New-birth,) at the same time taught—at least, were understood as

* Sumner's *Apostolical Preaching*.

teaching—that there is no intelligible connexion whatever between the sign and the thing signified, nor any real benefit attached to the Rite. The new-birth they taught their people to hope for at some future indefinite time. And they taught them to believe, as a part of the christian revelation, that, of infants brought to baptism, an uncertain, indefinite number of individuals—*undistinguishable* at that time from the rest—are, by the divine decree, totally and finally excluded from all share in the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Now, men accustomed to see and hear all this, would be not unlikely to listen with favour to those who declared—professedly by divine inspiration—that "water-baptism," as they call it, is an empty and superstitious ceremony, originating in a misapprehension of our Lord's meaning; of which meaning they—gifted with the same inspiration as his Apostles—are commissioned to be interpreters.

And when one Sacrament had been thus explained away, the rejection of the other also, according to a similar kind of reasoning, would follow of course.

And, after all, this rejection was but the carrying out of a principle of procedure which had been long before sanctioned by others. It had been long before decided that, at the Eucharist, one of the appointed symbols might safely be omitted, and that the perfect spiritual participation by the Communicants in the benefit of the Sacrament is not thereby at all impaired. To dispense with the other symbol also, and likewise with the symbol of the other Sacrament, and then to call this a spiritual celebration of the Sacraments, was only taking a step further in the same direction.

In truth, the abolition of the Sacraments, by explaining away as figurative, words of our Lord which were undoubtedly understood by his hearers at the time literally; or, again, the literal interpretation of his words, "this is my body," which must have been understood at the time figuratively, (for the Apostles could not have supposed that at the Last Supper He was holding in his hands his own literal body;) or the addition of fresh Sacraments not instituted by Him or his Apostles: or a departure from the mode He appointed of celebrating the

Eucharist, by the withholding of the cup, —all these, and any other similar liberties taken with Scripture, stand on the same ground, and are equally justifiable, or equally unjustifiable. If certain individuals, or Councils, or other Bodies of men, are really inspired messengers from Heaven, "moved by the Spirit" to declare with infallible certainty the Will of the Lord, then their words are to be received and obeyed with the same deference as those of Peter or Paul. And if they announce any change in the divine dispensations, or give any new interpretation of any part of Scripture, we are bound to acquiesce, even as the Jews were required to do in that great "mystery of the Gospel," the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to Gentiles. It is God who speaks by their mouths; and he who has established any ordinance has evidently the power to abrogate or alter it.

And when persons who make such a claim (or admit it in their leaders) profess to take Scripture for their guide, they must be understood to mean that it is their guide only in the sense attached to it by the persons thus divinely commis-

sioned, and in those points only wherein no additional or different revelation has been made through these persons. When there has, the *later* revelation, of course, supersedes the earlier.

Nor does it make any real difference whether something be added to the Bible, claiming equal divine authority, or whether merely an alleged infallible *interpretation* be given of what is already written. For an interpretation coming from any Church or person divinely commissioned, and speaking "as the Spirit moveth," and thence authorized to declare (which is exactly an equivalent expression) "*thus saith the Lord,*" is of the same authority with Scripture itself, and must be implicitly received, however at variance with the sense which any ordinary reader would, of himself, attach to the words. And those who completely surrender their own judgment to any supposed infallible interpreter are, in fact, taking him—not Scripture—for their guide.

It is most important,—when the expression is used of "referring to Scripture as the infallible standard," and requiring

assent to such points of faith only as can be thence proved, to settle clearly in the outset, the important question "proved *to whom?*" If any man, or Body of men refer us to Scripture, as the sole authoritative standard, meaning that we are not to be called on to believe anything as a necessary point of faith, on their word, but only on *our own* conviction that it is scriptural, then, they place our faith on the basis, not of human authority, but of divine. But if they call on *us*, as a point of conscience, to receive whatever is proved to *their* satisfaction from Scripture, even though it may appear to *us* unscriptural, then, instead of releasing us from the usurped authority of Man taking the place of God, they are placing on us two burdens instead of one. "You require us," we might reply, "to believe, first, that whatever you teach is *true;* and, secondly, besides this, to believe also, that it is a truth *contained in Scripture;* and we are to *take your word* for both!"

When, therefore, any such claim is set up, we are authorized and bound to require "the signs of an Apostle." One who

supports his opinions by *argument*, is at least entitled to a hearing, however wide those opinions may be from what are generally held. But it is not so with those who claim assent on the ground of having received a revelation from the infallible Spirit of God. Professed ambassadors from Heaven should be called on to show their *credentials*—the miraculous powers which alone can prove their inspiration—on pain of being convicted of profane presumption in daring to "say, THUS SAITH THE LORD, when the Lord hath not spoken."

There are some persons, however, who bewilder themselves and others, by confounding together the two senses of the word inspiration. In one sense, everything that is true, and that is good, in the Christian, may be said to be from the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit," which we pray for to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts;"* since, "without Me," says our Lord, "ye can do nothing." But this inspiration is what can only be known by

* *Communion Service.*

its fruits, to be judged of by comparing our life and doctrine with Scripture.

When, on the other hand, we speak of the Apostles as "INSPIRED WRITERS," we understand by that, that they had received a communication from Heaven of the *infallible* truth of which they themselves and all others could be assured.

It is probable, again, that many persons deceive both others and themselves by confusing together in their minds differences of *degree*, and differences of *amount;* and thence imagining (what a little calm reflection must show to be impossible, and, indeed, unintelligible) that there may be different *degrees* of what is properly and strictly termed INSPIRATION: that is, the *miraculous* influence under which we conceive anything that we call "an inspired Work" to have been written. The existence or non-existence of this inspiration is a question of *fact;* and though there may be different degrees of *evidence for* the existence of a fact, it is plain that one fact cannot be, itself, more or less a fact than another.

Inspiration may extend either to the

very words uttered, or merely to the subject-matter of them, or merely to a certain portion of the matter;—to all, for instance, that pertains to *religious* truth, so as to afford a complete exemption from doctrinal error—though not, to matters of Geography, Natural Philosophy, &c. But in every case we understand that to whatever points the inspiration does extend, in these it secures *infallibility;* and infallibility manifestly cannot admit of *degrees.*

When we are speaking of the instructive, the eloquent, the entertaining, &c., we may call one discourse tolerably well-written, another rather better written, and a third better still. Each of them is what it is, in a different degree from the others. But we could not with propriety speak of one discourse as being "somewhat inspired," another, as "rather more inspired," and again, another, as "a good deal inspired."

If any one is distinctly commissioned to deliver a message from Heaven, in any one instance, with infallible proof to himself and to others, that it is such, he is as truly inspired, and his revelation as much

a revelation, as if he had had revealed to him a hundred times a greater *quantity* of superhuman knowledge. *That* one message is as much God's Word as any part of Scripture. Even so Paul, who "spoke with tongues more than all" the disciples he was addressing,* had not *more* that miraculous gift (though he had the gift of *more* tongues) than any one of them who had been supernaturally taught a single foreign language.

If a man has ascertained, and can prove, that he has had, either in words, or merely in substance, a revelation (properly so-called) of some doctrine, or again, an infallible divine assurance of safety from religious errors, he is to be listened to—in reference *to those points to which the inspiration extends*—as speaking with divine authority. But on the other hand, if he has no infallible proofs to give of having received a divine communication, then, though most or all of what he says may be, in fact, perfectly true, he has no right to use such an expression as "thus saith the LORD!" or "the Spirit moveth me to

* 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

say so and so." He ought rather to say —what a pious and humble preacher must mean—I hope and trust that what I am setting forth is sound and useful doctrine; *and so far as it is* so, it must be the gift of Him "from whom all good things do proceed;" but *how far* it is so, both you and I must judge as well as we can, by a careful reference to Holy Scripture, with a full consciousness of our own fallibility.

Practice of the Apostles.

§ 6. Our safest and most humbly pious course is, in any practical question, to endeavour to ascertain, in the first instance, what was the practice of the Apostles; and to adhere to that, whenever we find that the rules or customs they sanctioned were not of a merely local or temporary character, but were equally suited to our own Age and Country. And not only is respect due to their *practices*, but these practices will often throw light on their *doctrine;* since whatever *belief*, on any point, seems naturally to be implied in what they were accustomed to *do*, may be presumed to have been *their* belief. And we ought

surely rather to put ourselves under their teaching, where it is to be had, than to adopt and act upon the inferences drawn from any theological theory of our own.

Now with respect to the question of infant-baptism, though there is not in Scripture any express injunction or prohibition relating to it, any one who inquires with an unbiassed mind may arrive, I think, at a complete moral certainty as to what was the practice of the Apostles and other primitive Christians.

For several years, we should remember, they were all *Jews*. And even after the Gentiles had begun to be engrafted into the Church, the Gospel was still, in each place, preached first in the Jewish Synagogue; and the greatest part of the most eminent teachers were of that nation.

Now men brought up under the LAW, would, of course, adhere to the principles of that law, wherever these were not at variance with Christianity; and would be disposed to view everything in the Gospel *according to the analogy* of Judaism, except when *taught otherwise*. And their inspired instructors did teach them otherwise, when

there was need. Whenever this disposition was carried to a faulty excess,—as in the well-known instance (Acts xv.) of the attempt to place Gentile-Christians under the Levitical Law,—the error was, we may be sure, as in that instance, promptly corrected, and firmly resisted by the Apostles.

Now Baptism having always been clearly understood to be the initiatory rite by which members were admitted into the christian Church,* it cannot, I think, be doubted, by any unprejudiced inquirer, that the early Christians must have been prepared to observe the like rules in admitting (by Baptism) members into the christian Church, to those they had been accustomed to, in reference to the Jewish. If it had been the rule to admit Adults only into the Mosaic Covenant—if infancy had been a bar to any one's reception,—then, they would never have thought of

* Agreeably to our Lord's charge to his Apostles (Matthew xxviii.), the exact rendering of which is "make disciples of all nations" (*i.e.*, enrol them as members of the Church) "by baptizing them into the name," &c.

The *marginal* rendering of μαθητεύσατε in our Bible is preferable to that in the text.

See also Acts viii. 36, and x. 47.

baptizing *children* into the christian Church, unless *expressly commanded* to do so. If—as is the fact—they had been accustomed to enrol in the *Jewish* Church their own infants, and proselytes of all ages, then, they would, as a matter of course, adhere to the same rule, in reference to the *christian* Church, unless *expressly forbidden.* And so strong and, universal must have been the disposition to bring to Baptism the *children* of believers, that if this had not been allowable, we should undoubtedly have found in the New Testament most distinct and frequent notices of its prohibition. As for distinct injunctions or recommendations, these could not have been at all needed in favour of any practice about which there had never been any hesitation.

And as for the many scruples and questions that have been raised relative to infant-baptism, none of these would be likely even to occur to their minds; because they had been familiar all their lives with the admission into the Mosaic Covenant of infants, incapable, at the time,

of availing themselves of, or at all understanding, the benefits of that Covenant.

How the Apostles must have been understood by Jewish Converts.

§ 7. We have therefore, I conceive, a complete moral certainty that the earliest Christians did practise infant-baptism, and that it received at least the tacit sanction and approval of the Apostles; whose prohibitions of it we should not have failed to find recorded, had it been at all objectionable.

But in this, and in several other points also, difficulties, and sometimes serious mistakes, are likely to arise from want of sufficient care to view the Gospel through the medium of the *Law*;—to recollect, that is, not only that the Mosaic Dispensation itself was the forerunner and type of the christian, which fulfilled and extended it, but also that Christianity was first preached *by*, and *to*, men who had been brought up Jews; and that accordingly we must carefully consider, and steadily keep in mind, what were the habits and modes of thought, of Jews, of that Age and Country, and in what way *they* would

be likely to understand and to act upon the precepts and doctrines delivered to them. For, the interpretations which were the most obvious to *them* will be often different from what may be the most obvious to *us* of the present day. And again, it will often happen that what were to them the greatest difficulties (as, for instance, the admission of the Gentiles to be "fellow-heirs") will be, to us, no difficulties at all. And whatever meaning presented itself to *their* minds, may be presumed to be the right one, whenever they were not taught otherwise by their inspired guides the Apostles, who were at hand to correct any mistakes they might fall into.

Thus, for instance, if we would inquire what we are to understand by "Saints" — "God's People" — and "the Elect" ["chosen"] &c. our safest course is to look to the sense in which an *Israelite* had been accustomed to hear those words employed, and to consider how *he* would be likely to understand them, by analogy, in reference to the Gospel-dispensation.*

* See *Sermon on "Christian Saints."*

And so also, if we would understand what was meant by the "baptizing of a Household," which we read of in the New Testament—whether it included, or not, the *infant-children* of the believing parents, —our guide should be the practice of the Israelites in reference to any Gentile-family, the Heads of which had renounced idolatry, and desired to be admitted as proselytes—as Israelites by adoption,—into the number of God's Chosen People under the Old Dispensation. "Let ALL his males be circumcised, and then let him draw near and eat the Passover," was the direction of the Law under which they acted.

And if an intelligent and well-disposed Israelite had been asked, what benefit he contemplated as accruing from enrolment in the number of God's People, to an infant, incapable of either obeying or disobeying the Law, and of enjoying, or understanding, the promised blessings of the Covenant, he would probably have replied, that the child—being dedicated to the Lord by Jewish parents or guardians, solemnly bound to instruct and

bring him up as a Jew—might be expected, as soon as he should be able, and as far as he should be able, to understand these things, to become, gradually, an observer of the Law, and a partaker of its benefits; and that, then, he would not obtain a new *possession* of something which, before, was not his, but would merely enter on the full enjoyment of a benefit previously conferred on him.

The case, in short, would be viewed as analogous to some which occur every day in the ordinary business of life. In the common language, for instance, of secular business, a person is said to have *received* —as a payment, or as a gift,—such and such a sum of money; even when no *money* is actually handed to him, but only a *draft* on some banker who is ready to pay it as soon as presented. And we speak of him as having received this sum, although we know that he may possibly not present the draft for several days or weeks; or may even, through gross negligence, fail ever to present it at all. Or again, take the case of an infant inheriting an estate, or a title, or the "freedom" of

some corporation. Though not capable, at the time, of profiting by, or understanding these advantages, he will subsequently become so; and will then, if he use them aright, not *acquire* any new possession, but derive the suitable advantages from those to which he was already entitled. And even as the inheritor of a fortune may, when he grows up, make either a good or an ill use of his wealth, so, any one, whether the child of an Israelite by birth, or of a Proselyte admitted into the Jewish Church, might in after-life, either avail himself rightly of the privileges thus bestowed on him, or convert them into a curse, by his neglect or abuse of them.

And supposing this latter case—supposing the son of some devout Proselyte to have become an idolater, or in some other way a transgressor of the Law—he would, no doubt, have been admonished (by a Prophet, or other pious Jew) not, to *become* an Israelite—not, to seek *admission* into the number of God's chosen People, —but, to repent, and *return* to the Lord, to *reform* his life, and to walk worthy of

the privileges to which he had been admitted.

Now all this, an intelligent and pious Jew who should have embraced the Gospel, would naturally be inclined to apply, by analogy, to the case of the Christian-dispensation.

Analogy of the Mosaic Law.

§ 8. And accordingly, one of the most eminent of these—the Apostle Paul himself—directs the attention of his converts to such an analogy: applying the very word "*baptized*" to the Israelites on their deliverance from Egypt; whom he speaks of as being *all* "chosen" to be partakers of special divine favours; while yet,—as he reminds the Corinthians (1 Cor. x.)—most* of those very men "were overthrown in the wilderness;" not, according to any eternal divine decree (at least he mentions none) excluding them from the promised blessings, but as a consequence of their obstinate rebellions. It was because "they thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto his

* τοῖς πλείοσιν.

word," that the Lord "sware unto them that they should not enter into his rest." And all "these things" Paul tells the Corinthians, "are written for the admonition" of Christians.

It is thus that (as was remarked above) we may plainly learn from the *practice* of the early Church what were the *doctrines* taught in it. Having ascertained what the early Christians were accustomed, under the guidance of the Apostles, to *do*, in reference to the administration of Baptism, we may thence safely infer what was their *belief* on the subject.

And here it is to be remarked, by the way, that I have been representing a pious and intelligent Israelite as speaking, all along, of the case of children brought forward for dedication to the Lord, *by parents or guardians designing to educate them accordingly*. He would surely never imagine that any one could have a right or a power, to admit into the Mosaic Covenant a Gentile infant who was to be brought up as a heathen. And, by parity of reasoning, he would not, as a Christian, regard as of any avail, or as a valid Bap-

tism at all, the performance of an outward ceremony on an infant that is to be brought up—as far as we know and believe—in entire ignorance of christian duties and privileges. No one would be regarded as sowing seed to any purpose, —or indeed as, in correct language, *sowing* it at all, who should purposely scatter corn on the trodden way-side, with a full knowledge that it would be immediately "devoured by the fowls of the air," instead of springing up, and producing, "first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear."

I mention this, because there are instances recorded, of priests administering by stealth (through mistaken pious charity) what they regard as the right of christian Baptism, to the infants of savages, or of Chinese or Hindu Idolaters. But in *our* Church it is plain no such procedure is recognized. Our Formularies all along most plainly contemplate the case of a child *brought* to Baptism by persons pledging themselves to its education as a Christian. In the narrative so earnestly dwelt on in the baptismal Service, the children

brought to our Lord for his blessing, must evidently have been the children of *believing* parents.* And all the declarations made in our Formularies—the hopes expressed—the Prayers—the Exhortations—in short, everything that is said—must evidently be understood as proceeding on this supposition.

And accordingly, the very reason assigned in the Catechism for its being allowable to administer Baptism to infants, is, that as there are certain indispensable *conditions* of the benefits promised to them, so, the fulfilment of these conditions is promised *by* them, through their Sureties.

As for the "remission of sins" at Baptism, so frequently alluded to in our Services, this, it is plain, cannot be understood of *actual* sins, in the case of an *infant*, which is not a moral agent at all, nor capable of either transgressing or obeying

* See Luke xviii. 15. The right rendering of τὰ βρέφη evidently is, in this passage, "their infants." The article (which our Translators are apt to overlook altogether) has often the sense of our possessive pronoun. So it has also in French. "I have a pain in my head" would be rendered "j'ai mal à *la* tête:" *the* head.

God's laws,—of resisting, or of following the suggestions of his Spirit. Nor again can it mean an entire removal and abolition of the frail and sinful nature,—the "*phronema sarkos*" inherited by every descendant of Adam; since our 9th Article expressly declares that this "remaineth even in those that are regenerate." But it seems to denote that those duly baptized are considered no longer as children of the condemned and disinherited Adam—as no longer aliens from God*—disqualified for his service—and excluded from the offers of the Gospel, but are received into the number of God's adopted children, and have the promise of forgiveness of sins, and, as it were, the treasury thrown open to them of divine grace, through which, if they duly avail themselves of it, though not otherwise—they will attain final salvation.

Those who seek to go as far as they can

* This is doubtless what is meant by the expression "children of wrath," in the Catechism, and "deserving God's wrath," in the Ninth Article. The Reformers could not have meant the words "God's *wrath*" to be understood in their literal sense; since they had laid it down in the First Article that God is "without body, parts, or *passions*."

towards doing away all connexion of spiritual benefit with Baptism, and reducing it to a mere sign of admission into a *community possessing no spiritual endowments at all*, sometimes appeal to the case of Cornelius and his friends, on whom "the Holy Ghost fell" before they were baptized. But they seem to forget that this was the *miraculous gift of tongues, of prophecy*, &c., which never was, *nor was ever supposed* to be, the "inward spiritual grace" of Baptism. It was never conferred at Baptism; [see Acts viii. 16,] but was always bestowed, except in this one case, (in which there was an obvious reason for the exception,) through the laying on of hands of an Apostle [see Acts xix. 6]. And accordingly the Romans, when Paul wrote to them [Rom. i. 11], had received no miraculous gifts, though they were baptized Christians, and are reminded by the Apostle that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

Language of our Reformers.

§ 9. Such seems to be the most simple and unforced interpretation of the language of

our Church in various passages of her Formularies: as for instance in the Catechism, where the Catechumen speaks of "Baptism, wherein I was made a child of God . . . and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven;" and again, where it is said that "being by nature born in sin . . . we are hereby made the children of Grace."

Now this placing of a person in a different condition from that in which he was originally born, may, not unaptly, be designated (as it appears to be, by our Reformers) by the term "Regeneration" or "New-birth."*

But no one can suppose that they regarded the sowing of seed, as the same thing with the full maturity of the corn for harvest, or as necessarily implying it. To be born into the natural world, is not the same thing as to be grown up: nor can it be pronounced of every infant that is born, that it *will*, necessarily, grow up into manly maturity. So, also, our Reformers never meant to teach that every

* The Ninth Article has, in the original Latin, the word "renati" twice; translated, first, "regenerate," and afterwards, "baptized."

one who is baptized is sure of salvation, independently of his "leading the rest of his life according to this beginning;" [*Baptismal Service;*] or again, that we can be infallibly sure that he *will* do so; any more than we can pronounce with certainty (according to the analogy of a temporal inheritance, above alluded to) that one who has an estate bequeathed to him, will claim his inheritance in proper form, and will also make that right use of his wealth on which depends its becoming a real blessing to him.

The language used by our Reformers, on this subject, as being, in their judgment, the most in accordance with that of Scripture, is certainly not exempt from difficulties and dangers to the "unlearned and unstable, who wrest even the Scriptures to their own destruction." But to have omitted all mention of "regeneration," which is so often mentioned and alluded to in Scripture, is what no one could think of. And to have used (as some do) a different kind of language from that which our Reformers do use, would have been to incur at least an equal danger, if not a

still greater. If there be a danger of the "unlearned and unstable" relying too much on the efficacy of Baptism, surely no candid and thoughtful person can doubt that persons of a like character, if taught that the "new birth" necessarily implies infallible salvation, may be led, if they believe themselves to have experienced this new birth, into a careless confidence, and may neglect to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling;" especially if they hear a preacher say—and it *has* been said from the pulpit—that "God's people ought, indeed, to grieve much at the sinfulness of the world, but never to *feel any alarm or uneasiness at any sins of their own*, because God *leaves his own people to fall into many grievous sins*, on purpose to *humble* them."

If any one sees no danger in such teaching as this, he must be beyond the reach of argument.*

* On this subject I have subjoined, in a note at the end of this part, some extracts from the writings of the late Bishop Ryder, of Mr. Simeon, and of Archbishop Sumner.

When one party in the Church censure severely, and not unreasonably, another party, for explaining away,

The expression, in our Catechism, of "an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven" seems to be used in reference to the *tendency*, and the suitable *result*, of an admission into the Church of Christ. And such a kind of language is often employed by all Writers: and not least, by the Apostles. When, for instance, the Apostle John says that "whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World, and that every one who is born of God, doth not commit sin," it cannot be supposed that he meant to attribute to Christians moral *perfection*, and *impeccability*; when, on the contrary, he exhorts them to "confess their sins." Far was it from his design, to teach that one who did but feel convinced of having experienced the new-birth, might safely remit his exertions, and relax his vigilance against sin, and

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to suit their own views, the plain words of one portion of our Formularies, while they themselves put a no less forced construction, for their own purposes, on another portion, and incur, for so doing, an equally strong, and equally just censure from their opponents, it seems but too plain that neither party really disapprove of such a procedure on account of its intrinsic unfairness, but merely when it makes against themselves.

"count himself to have apprehended" and to be thenceforward sure of divine acceptance, and of everlasting life, without "taking heed lest he fall." On the contrary, he was writing—as is well known—in opposition to those Gnostics of his day, who were grossly Antinomian, and who, while they professed to "have no sin" in God's sight, and to be sure of salvation through their supposed "knowing the Gospel" (Gnosis), lived a life of flagrant immorality.

In contradiction to these monstrous tenets, he declares that every one who has a well-grounded "hope in Christ, purifieth himself, even as He is pure:"—that a sinful life is *inconsistent* with the character of the "sons of God;"—that the *tendency*, in short, and suitable result of being "born of God," is opposed to the commission of sin.

And indeed, in all subjects, it is a very common mode of speaking, to attribute to any person or thing, some quality, which, though not an *invariable*, is a *suitable*, or natural, attribute, and may reasonably be looked for therein.

In this way, many words have come to

vary gradually from their original signification. For instance, to "cure," in its etymological sense, (from "curare") signifies to take *care* of a patient, and to administer medicines. In its present use, it implies the *successful* administration.

So also it is with the word* which, in the language of the New Testament Writers, signifies not to *tend*, but to *heal;* and is so rendered in our version, though the other is well known to be the original meaning of it.

In like manner we often, figuratively, *deny* some title to an object that is wanting in those qualities which *ought* to belong to it, or which that title suggests as a natural and consistent accompaniment, and what may fairly be expected. Thus, for instance, in speaking of some act of excessive baseness or depravity, it is not uncommon to say "one who could be guilty of this, is *not* a MAN:" meaning, of course, that such conduct is unworthy of the manly character;—inconsistent with what may be fairly expected from a *man*, as such; and more suitable to the brutish

* θεραπεύω.

nature.* But so far are we from understanding that any one who acts thus unworthily, is not, strictly and literally, a man, that on the contrary, this is the very ground of our censure. We condemn a *man* who acts the part of a brute, precisely *because* he *is* a man—a Being from whom something better might have been looked for—and *not* one of the brute-creation.

Again, any one might say of a garden that was greatly neglected, and over-run with wild plants, "this is *not* a *garden*," or "it does not deserve the name of a garden;" though it is precisely because it is, literally, a garden, that we speak thus contemptuously of it: since, in an uncultivated spot, the sight of a luxuriant wild vegetation does not offend the eye.

It is in a similar mode of speaking that Paul declares, that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and cir-

* "I dare do all that may become a *man;*
Who dares do more, is *none.*"—*Macbeth.*

Some remarks on this kind of language, in reference to another subject, will be found in the treatise on *Rhetoric*, Part III. chapter iii. § 3.

cumcision is of the heart," &c.,* meaning, as, no doubt, every one must have understood him, that one who is not in his heart, and his conduct, a servant of the Lord, is wanting in what *ought* to characterize the Lord's People,—is *inconsistent* with his profession, and an *unworthy* member of the Jewish Church;—one who will derive no benefit, but the contrary, from the privileges to which he has been admitted as a Jew. For, it is because such a one *is*, literally, a Jew, that he will incur a heavier penalty than an unenlightened Heathen.

He might equally well have said—and doubtless would have been ready to say—according to the same kind of figure—that he is not a "baptized" Christian—he is not "regenerate"—who is so outwardly alone, and has nothing of the christian character within. And indeed the Apostle Peter actually does employ similar language in speaking of Baptism, (which, he says, "saveth us") when he says that it is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh," (*i. e.* the outward application of water) "but the answer of a good con-

* Rom. ii. 28.

science towards God;" not meaning that a person deficient in this has not been, literally, and in the strict and proper sense of the word, baptized at all, and needs to have that rite administered to him; but that he is wanting in that which is the proper and beneficial *result* of an admission into the christian Church.

And corresponding forms of expression are very common, on various subjects; and seldom give rise to any error, or confusion of thought, or obscurity, except in those cases (religious discussions are among the principal) in which men under the influence of some strong prejudice, exercise their ingenuity in seeking for anything that may serve as an argument, and in interpreting words according to the letter and against the spirit, for the sake of supporting some favourite theory.

Confirmation the sequel to one Sacrament, and the introduction to the other.

§ 10. Once more then I would invite attention to the importance of examining carefully, in any controversy that may arise, how far it may turn on differences in the expressions em-

ployed. Let any two persons, whose views appear at the first glance, widely at variance, be prevailed on to depart, for a time at least, from the strict technical language of a theological School, and to state, in as *many different forms as possible*, what is the practical advice they would give to each Christian, under various circumstances: and it will often come out, that one whom his neighbour had perhaps been at first disposed to condemn as abandoning some fundamental truths of Christianity, has, in fact, merely avoided the particular terms in which the other has been accustomed to express them; and the difference between the parties is not such, either in degree or in kind, as had been supposed.

In guarding however against verbal controversies *mistaken for real*,* I would not be understood as thinking little of the importance of careful accuracy of language. Indeed, the very circumstance that inattention to this may lead to serious mistakes as to our meaning, would alone be sufficient to show how needful it is to be careful as to our mode of expression.

* See Logic, *Verbal Questions.*

And here it may be remarked, that the Clergy have an especial opportunity, and an especial call, for giving early, and full, and systematic instruction on all the points here touched on, in their discharge of that most important branch of their duty, the preparing of children for the solemn Ordinance of CONFIRMATION. The course of that preparation affords them a most fitting occasion for explaining to them the character of the Sacraments according to the views of our Church; which evidently designs to make Confirmation, not a distinct Sacrament, but a connecting link between the two;—a kind of supplement and completion to the one, and an introduction to the other. And this sacred rite has the advantage, when duly administered to persons properly prepared, of obviating every reasonable objection to the practice of Infant-Baptism, and thus justifying, and exhibiting as an harmonious whole, the system of Church-ordinances established by our Reformers.

All persons accordingly ought to receive the holy Communion of the Lord's Supper on the very first opportunity after being

confirmed. Our Church directs that "no one shall be admitted to the Communion except one who has been confirmed, or is ready and desirous to be confirmed;" and again, that "ALL PERSONS" (that is, of course, all who are not too young or too ignorant for Confirmation) "shall receive the Communion at least three times a year." From this it is plain that though such as have not been confirmed, may, if they are prepared and willing to do so, attend without any scruple, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; on the other hand, no one, who *has* been confirmed, ought to delay receiving that Sacrament. The Catechism also, designed for the instruction of children before Confirmation, proves the same thing: since it contains an explanation of the *two* Sacraments.

Some persons entertain a groundless notion, that a child, who is fit for Confirmation, may yet be too young to receive the Communion: and many, it is to be feared, for this and for other reasons, go on from Sunday to Sunday, and from year to year, putting off this duty, in expectation of becoming more *fit* for it; when it

is likely that they are becoming every day *less* fit, and are falling into a careless and irreligious state of mind.

But if you will consider the matter carefully, you will see that our Church is quite right in determining that all, who have been confirmed, should receive the Lord's Supper without delay. For all of them, it is to be hoped, understand and rightly reflect on the one Sacrament—that of Baptism; if they do not, the ceremony of Confirmation is a mere empty mockery: and if they do, they are capable of sufficiently understanding and valuing the other Sacrament also: and in that case, they ought not to delay receiving it.

NOTE TO P. 18.

"I would wish," remarks Bp. Ryder, "generally to restrict the term (regeneration) to the baptismal privileges; and considering them as comprehending not only an external admission into the visible Church, not only a covenanted title to the pardon and grace of the Gospel, but even a degree of spiritual aid vouchsafed, and ready

to offer itself to our acceptance or rejection at the dawn of reason. I would recommend a reference to these privileges in our discourses, as talents which the hearer should have so improved as to bear interest; as seed which should have sprung up and produced fruit.

"But at the same time I would solemnly protest against that most serious error (which has arisen probably from exalting too highly the just view of baptismal regeneration) of contemplating all the members of a baptized congregation as *converted*,—as having, all, once known the truth, and entered upon the right path, though some may have wandered from it, and others may have made little progress,—as not therefore requiring (what all by nature, and most it is to be feared through defective principle and practice, require) that 'transformation by the renewing of the mind;'—that 'putting off the old man, and putting on the new man,' which is so emphatically enjoined by St. Paul to his baptized Romans and Ephesians."—*Extract from Bishop Ryder's (of Lichfield) Primary Charge to his Clergy.*

"In the baptismal Service," says the late Mr. Simeon, "*we thank God for having regenerated the baptized infant by his Holy Spirit.* Now from hence it appears that, *in the opinion of our Reformers, regeneration and remission of sins did accompany baptism.* But in what sense did they hold this sentiment? Did they maintain that there was no need for the seed then sown in the heart of the baptized persons to grow up and to bring forth fruit; or that he could be saved in any other way than by a progressive renovation of his soul after the divine image? Had they asserted any such doctrine as that, it would have been impossible for any enlightened person to concur with them. But nothing can be conceived more repugnant to their sentiments than such an idea as this: so far from harbouring such a thought, they have, and that too in this very prayer, taught us to look to God for that total change both of heart and life which, *long since their days, has begun to be expressed* by the term 'regeneration.' *After thanking God for regenerating the infant by his Holy Spirit,* we are taught to pray 'that

he being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin;' and then, declaring the total change to be the necessary mean. of his obtaining salvation, we add, 'so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he *may* be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom.' Is there (I would ask) any person that can require more than this? Or does God in his word require more? There are two things to be noticed in reference to this subject, the *term* 'regeneration' and the *thing*. The term occurs but twice in the Scriptures: in one place it refers to baptism, and is distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Ghost, *which, however, is represented as attendant on it;* and in the other place it has a totally distinct meaning unconnected with the subject. Now the *term* they use as the *Scripture* uses it, and the thing they require as strongly as any person can require it. They do not give us any reason to imagine that an adult person can be saved without experiencing all that *modern* divines [*Ultra-Protestant divines*] have included in the

term 'regeneration:' on the contrary, they do both there and in the liturgy insist upon a radical change of both heart and life. Here, then, the only question is, *not* 'Whether a baptized person can be saved by that ordinance without sanctification,' but whether God does always accompany the sign with the thing signified? Here is certainly room for difference of opinion, *but it cannot be positively decided in the negative*, because we cannot know, or even judge, respecting it, in any case whatever, except by the fruits that follow; and, therefore, in all fairness, it may be considered only as a doubtful point; and if he appeal, as he ought to do, to the holy Scripture, they certainly do in *a very remarkable way accord with the expressions in our liturgy*. St. Paul says, 'By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles—whether we be bond or free—and have been all made to *drink into* one Spirit.' And this he says of all the visible members of Christ's body, (1 Cor. xii. 13, 27.) Again, speaking of the whole nation of Israel, infants, as well as adults, he says, 'they

were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and *that rock was Christ,*' (1 Cor. x. 1, 4.) Yet, behold, in the very next verse he tells us that, 'with many of them God was displeased, and overthrew them in the wilderness.' In another place he speaks yet more strongly still: 'As many of you (says he) as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' Here we see what is meant by the expression, 'baptized into Christ;' it is precisely the same expression as that before mentioned of the Israelites being 'baptized unto Moses;' the preposition, εἰς, is used in both places; it includes all that had been initiated into his religion by the rite of baptism; and of them, universally, does the Apostle say, '*They have put on Christ.*' Now, I ask, have not the persons who scruple the use of that prayer in the baptismal service equal reason to scruple the use of these different expressions?

"Again, St. Peter says, 'Repent and

be baptized every one of you *for the remission of sins.*' (Acts ii. 38, 39.) And in another place, 'Baptism doth now save us.' (1 Pet. iii. 21.) And speaking elsewhere of baptized persons who were unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he says, '*He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*' (2 Pet. i. 9.) *Does not this very strongly countenance the* IDEA WHICH OUR REFORMERS ENTERTAINED, THAT THE REMISSION OF OUR SINS, AND THE REGENERATION OF OUR SOULS, IS ATTENDANT ON THE BAPTISMAL RITE? Perhaps it will be said that the inspired writers spake of persons who had been baptized at an adult age. But if they did so in some places, they certainly did not in others; and where they did not, they must be understood as comprehending all, whether infants or adults; and therefore the language of our liturgy, which is not a whit stronger than theirs, may be both subscribed and used without any just occasion of offence.

"Let me then speak the truth before God: though I am no Arminian, *I do think the refinements of Calvin have done*

great harm in the Church; they have driven *multitudes from the plain and popular way of speaking used by the inspired writers*, and have made them unreasonably and unscripturally squeamish in their modes of expression; and I conceive that the less addicted any person is to systematic accuracy, the more he will accord with the inspired writers, and the more he will approve the views of our Reformers. I do not mean, however, to say that a slight alteration in two or three instances would not be an improvement, since it would take off a *burthen* from many minds, and supersede the necessity of laboured explanations; but I do mean to say that there is no such objection to these expressions as to deter any conscientious person from giving his unfeigned assent and consent to the liturgy altogether, or from using the particular expressions which we have been endeavouring to explain."—*Simeon's Works*, vol. ii. p. 259.

"In the case of infant baptism," says Archbishop Sumner, "there are evidently no similar means of ascertaining the actual disposition. The benefit received is strictly

gratuitous, or 'of free grace.' It is promised, however, to faith and obedience, presupposed in the recipient, and pledged in his name by the sponsors: whence it follows that the blessing attached to the sacrament must fail, if the conditions fail in those who are capable of performing them: and that the faith and obedience must become actual and personal in those who arrive at mature age. It has not altered the nature of Christianity, that its external privileges are become national. Whoever, therefore, professes the hope of the Gospel, must individually embrace the doctrine of the Gospel: must consent as sincerely as the earliest converts, to refer whatever he does in word or deed to the glory of God: with the primitive humility of the Apostles must renounce all confidence in his own strength, and must look for salvation through Christ's death, with as much personal gratitude as if Christ had suffered for him alone. Though in many cases it may be impossible, as was formerly acknowledged, for those who have been placed in covenant with God by baptism, to state at what time

and by what process the truths of the Gospel became an active principle in the mind, still it is undeniable that in all who attain the age of reason they must become so, or the covenant is made void: and it is a definite and intelligible question whether they have actually taken this hold, or no. How the tree was nourished and invigorated, and enabled to sustain the inclement seasons which opposed its early growth and strength, we may in vain inquire; but whether it bears fruit or not, and whether that fruit gives evidence of a sound stock, any one may examine either as to himself or others. Is the heart possessed of a sincere conviction of its own sinfulness, and need of a Saviour: does it manifest its dependence on the Holy Spirit by an habitual intercourse with God through prayer: does it feel a practical sense of the great business of this life as a probation, and preparation for eternity? These are infallible characters of faith: and though they will be found in different degrees in different individuals, no one should be satisfied with himself, and no one should suffer his

congregation to be satisfied, till he can trace these characters in the heart.

"But if such a frame of mind is indispensable to a Christian's reasonable hope, it is evident that a preacher can in no wise take it for granted that it exists in his hearers as the necessary and certain consequence of baptism; but must require of all who have the privilege of baptism, that they strive to attain it; that, being *regenerate* in condition, they be also *renewed* in nature: and constantly examine themselves whether they have this proof within them, that they are born of the *Spirit* as well as of *water*, and can make the 'answer of a good conscience towards God.'"—*Sumner's Apostolical Preaching*, ch. vii.

PART II.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

§ 1. There can hardly be any truly devout Christian, and who is, accordingly, an habitual attendant at the Lord's Supper, who has not observed, with great sorrow, that a large proportion—frequently a great majority—of a congregation, withdraw from the celebration of that solemn ordinance; and that, of these, though some are occasional communicants (on one or two of the greatest Festivals of our Church), many are altogether strangers to the duty; and regard it, if they regard it at all as a duty for themselves, as something to be reserved for the death-bed, and, to stand in the place of the (so-called) sacrament of Extreme Unction of the Church of Rome. Habitually to communicate is what they have no notion of as a duty, to Christians as such, but only to persons who undertake to lead a life of

Deficient Attendance at the Lord's Table.

a certain pre-eminent holiness, and pretend to a kind of Saintship beyond, and quite distinct from what is suitable for Christians generally.

Accordingly, an intelligent stranger coming among us from some distant heathen land, and judging from his own observations and inquiries, as to the character of our religion (I mean, even that of our Church; putting out of account all other Denominations), would be likely to conclude that Christianity is not *one* religion, but two; designed for two different classes of persons, communicants and non-communicants; both, servants, indeed, of the same Master, but having, by his authority, different kinds of religious observances allotted to them respectively.

When ministers seek to form some calculation as to the effect of their exhortations, the Communion-table often furnishes something of a test, though only on the negative side. For though we cannot venture to assume that all who attend it are induced to do so by our persuasions, or that all of them are in a proper frame of mind, on the other hand, every one

who withdraws is a manifest instance of our failure.

I am not speaking of persons altogether irreligious, or who are neglectful of any acknowledged christian duties. Some such, indeed, we must always expect to meet with. But I am speaking of those whose neglect of the particular duty in question arises from some kind of misapprehension as to its character.

Superstitious Notions respecting the Eucharist.

§ 2. Among the causes which have led to the neglect of the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper by many, and probably in one christian Sect, to the absolute rejection of it, must be reckoned, I cannot doubt, the superstitions that have prevailed on the subject. For, every kind of superstition, besides the intrinsic evil of it, has a tendency to cast discredit on any doctrine or institution that has been abused by an admixture of human devices. The "wall daubed with untempered mortar," which has been built up by presumptuous Man, has a tendency to bring down in its fall the original and sound parts of the build-

ing. And thus the superstitious adoration of the elements of bread and wine—not to mention that it has exposed to contemptuous rejection the religion itself of which it was represented as a part—led, I apprehend, by a natural reaction, to the entire exclusion of the Sacrament itself, which had been thus abused, from the list of christian Ordinances. The paradoxical and revolting character of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the superstitions resulting from it, was doubtless one principal cause of that rejection of the Eucharist just alluded to. Not that the members themselves of the society in question, acknowledge this, or are likely to be themselves aware of it. But no one who has observed how apt one extreme is to lead to an opposite extreme, can deem such a conjecture unreasonable.*

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* It will probably astonish some of my readers to hear that our Lord's words at the Last Supper have actually been explained away to mean merely that He was pointing out the typical character of the sacrifice of the Passover!

To say nothing of the declaration (1 Cor. xi. 23) of the Apostle Paul, who had received a direct revelation and instructions on the subject from the Lord Jesus,—

Of course the same divine authority which instituted the Sacraments, may modify or annul them. And accordingly if any one declares that they are no longer to be literally celebrated, professing to be "moved by the Spirit" to say so (which is precisely equivalent to the expression of the ancient Prophets, "THUS SAITH THE LORD"), he is to be obeyed, provided he gives the requisite *proof* of his divine commission by the display of those sensible miracles which were "the signs of an Apostle." We are at liberty, indeed, to support by *arguments* our belief (however different it may be from that of the generality) as to the meaning of some passage of Scripture: but he who claims assent on the ground of having received a *divine communication*, is bound to give miraculous proofs of this. And in the absence of any such proofs, such a pretender and his followers, must be (as was

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it is plain that if the interpretation alluded to had been the true one, the words "take eat" &c., would have been accompanied by the giving his disciples not the *bread*, but the *flesh of the lamb*, which was properly the Passover.

remarked above, in Part I.) accounted guilty of a most daring presumption.

Some of these persons have alleged that there is no need of miracles to confirm their doctrines: since these are *what were taught by the Apostles*, who did establish their claim by miraculous proofs. But this holds good only with respect to doctrines admitted by *all* Christians. When any interpretation is taught wherein Christians are not agreed, and is declared to be *established by a direct divine revelation*, miraculous proof is needed of the truth of that interpretation. Thus, no fresh miraculous sign was required to convince the Jews of the divine authority of their prophetical writings; but when these were interpreted to denote the admission of "the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs," which the Jews did *not* acknowledge, then a miraculous proof was needed, *and was accordingly given* (Acts xi.), of this interpretation. But to assume without any proofs from reason, that a certain doctrine, contrary to what is generally received, is that of the Apostles, and thence to infer that the claims to inspira-

tion of those who teach it are to be admitted without requiring any miraculous proofs of such inspiration, is a most palpable begging of the question.

Besides the various doctrines, however, maintained by those of other Communions, there have arisen, of late years (among ourselves), persons teaching strange mystical notions respecting the Eucharist, such as can hardly be distinguished from the theory of Transubstantiation, and which have probably contributed to lead several of themselves and of their admirers to take the consistent step of openly joining the Church of Rome. Theories have been maintained by some professed members of our Church, that are in manifest contradiction to the express words of our Article; an Article which they explain away in a "non-natural sense," in such a manner, that anything might thus be made out of anything.

It has been maintained that the declaration that no change of the substance of bread and wine takes place, is to be interpreted to mean that a change of the Substance does take place, the Accidents

only remaining unchanged; which is notoriously the very doctrine our Reformers were opposing.

It would be well if any such writer and his admirers would consider what might be the result of taking similar liberties with *his own* expressions; which might, without any greater violence, be made to signify that he had no belief at all in Christianity as a divine revelation.

We have been told that "The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, when they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the sacramental bread," are really partakers (though to their own condemnation) of the body of Christ: that body which our Church declares "is in Heaven, and not here." And a strong presumption is thus created in favour of a Church which, consistently with this doctrine, teaches the *sacrifice* of the Mass, and calls the Communion-table an *Altar* (an expression which, unfortunately, many Protestants have inadvertently adopted), and inculcates the *adoration* of the *Host*—the victim supposed to be offered up on that Altar. And those who have accord-

ingly gone over to that Church—mistaken as we believe them to be—show at least a higher moral principle than those who practise or who approve the system of covertly holding and teaching doctrines utterly opposed to those of the Church they profess to adhere to.

Neglect by Protestants of a known duty.

§ 3. Some Protestants, however, we meet with who congratulate themselves on their exemption from Romish error, in this and in other points, but who need to be reminded that they are themselves guilty of a worse fault than what they censure in their brethren; from many of whom they might take an example to their own profit. For we find but too many Protestants (as was observed just above) withdrawing from the Lord's Table, in disregard of his plain injunction; while Roman Catholics do perform what they conceive to be a duty, though under what we hold to be erroneous notions concerning it.

And yet, there is much more reason for *them* to shrink from it under that kind of

mysterious dread which so often keeps back Protestants. For, what *we* have to trust to, is the divine commands and promises, together with that faith and devotion of our own, of which we can judge from our own consciousness. But the Romanist has to rely, in addition, on the inward INTENTION of the Priest. If *he* be a secret infidel, not intending, nor believing it possible, to convert the bread into the Lord's body, and inwardly regarding the whole Service with disdainful mockery —(and this is what, we know, hundreds of Priests in France declared of themselves, at the time of the first Revolution) —the whole Sacrament is nullified.

It is true however that this doctrine of "intention" is not brought prominently forward and pressed on the attention of the Roman Catholic laity. On the contrary, many of these will be found, on inquiry, even ignorant that their Church has any such doctrine, and ready to deny it; though it is a doctrine which the Council of Trent puts forth with an Anathema.

It should be added that even if the

officiating minister be himself sincere, the same nullity is incurred if there be an absence of the requisite "*intention*" in the priest who baptised him, or in the bishop who ordained him, or in those who baptised and ordained and consecrated that bishop, &c.—in short, if there be a flaw in any one of the innumerable links of that enormous chain on which the validity of a Sacrament is made to depend: so that no Romanist can have a reasonable certainty that he is not adoring a morsel of common bread. Yet many of them perform, nevertheless, what they sincerely believe to be their duty, while many a Protestant omits what he acknowledges to be his.

Erroneous Views respecting the Eucharist to be met by appeal to Scripture.

§ 4. As for those semi-Romish theories (as they may be called) just adverted to, I shall not attempt any particular examination of them, as they are so mystically obscure that it may be well doubted whether even the framers of them attach, themselves, any distinct meaning to their own language; and it cannot be doubted that, to plain

ordinary Christians, they must be altogether unintelligible. But I would remark, in reference to the doctrine of Transubstantiation itself, and to any others closely approaching it, that it is not advisable to resort (as some eminent Divines have done) to metaphysical arguments respecting the properties of Matter, or to appeals to the bodily senses, or to allegations of the abstract impossibility of such a miracle as is in this case pretended. At least, any considerations of this kind should hold a secondary and very subordinate place; and the primary and principal appeal should be made to the plain declarations of Scripture in their most natural sense.

Such was the procedure of our Reformers, who, in the twenty-eighth Article, instead of entering on any subtle disquisitions, declare that the doctrine of Transubstantiation "cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture."

If we are fully convinced that the Scriptures contain a divine revelation, we are required to receive whatever they dis-

tinctly assure us of, however little we may be able to understand its possibility. But then, if it be something extremely paradoxical, we may fairly expect to have —if it *is* to be an Article of Faith—a more distinct and unmistakeable declaration of it in Scripture than if it had been something antecedently probable, and in harmony with the rest of what is revealed.

Now, to the present case this principle will apply. It is, indeed, not correct to say (though it is very commonly said) that the alleged miracle of Transubstantiation contradicts the senses. For, all that is testified by the senses is, the *attributes* [the accidents] of any material object—the appearance, for instance, and smell, and taste, of bread; and all these attributes the advocates of Transubstantiation admit to remain unchanged. Our belief that that which has these attributes *is* the substance of bread, is an *inference* which we draw *from* the testimony of our senses; but however correct the inference may be, it is not the very thing which the senses themselves testify, but a conclu-

sion deduced from the perception of those qualities which the senses do present to us.

To state the matter in the briefest form: the procedure of Protestants, and, in all other cases, of Roman Catholics also, is this: Whatever has all the accidents of bread, is the substance, bread; this that is before us has those accidents; therefore it is the substance, bread. Now, of the two premises from which this inference is drawn, it is the minor only that the senses attest; and it is the *other* premiss that the Romanist denies. But he draws a like inference with ours from the testimony of his senses in all other cases; though he maintains, in this one case, not that our senses deceive us, but that there is a change of the substance of bread into that of a human body, while all the accidents (as they are called) of which—and of which alone—the senses take cognizance, remain unchanged. And if asked how this can be, and how a body can be at once, and entire, in thousands of places at once, he replies by a reference to the divine omnipotence.

§ 5. But it is admitted that all this is extremely paradoxical, and that the alleged miracle is a complete contrast to the acknowledged miracles of Jesus and his Apostles, which were appeals to the senses; *signs* (as they were usually called) of a divine mission; *proofs* as a foundation for faith; not matters of faith to be received in consequence of our being already believers in the Religion taught. The miracles that are recorded in Scripture cannot even be reckoned *improbable;* for, great as is, no doubt, the abstract improbability of any miracle, considered simply in itself, it is plain that (as is well observed by Origen) the propagation of Christianity by the sole force of miraculous claims, supposing them unfounded—the overthrow of the religions of the whole civilized world by a handful of Jewish peasants and fishermen, destitute of all superhuman powers—would be far more improbable than all the miracles narrated in Scripture. Even if we had, therefore, less full and distinct statements in Scripture of the miracles of Jesus and

Alleged Miracle of Transubstantiation, a contrast to those recorded in Scripture.

his Apostles than we have, there would have been a strong presumption that these men could not have done what they did but by the display of miraculous signs.

But as for the alleged miracle of Transubstantiation, it is but reasonable that we should at least require a very strong and clear declaration of it in the inspired Writings. And here it may be worth while to remark by the way, that it is not only paradoxical, but at variance even with the very description given of it by those who maintain it. For if you ask any one of them to state what was, for instance, the first miraculous sign displayed by Moses, he will say it was the change of the Rod into a Serpent; that which had the form, colour, motion, and, in short, all the "accidents" of a serpent, being in reality Moses's rod; and he will say, not that the serpent was *changed into a rod*, but, on the contrary, that the rod was changed into a serpent. In like manner, therefore, if that which has the appearance and all "accidents" of bread, be, in reality, a human body, he should say, not that bread is converted into the body,

but that the *body has become bread.* And if he say, that that which was originally bread is changed into the Lord's body, he must yet say, also, that that body is, immediately after, re-converted into bread.

Right Principle of interpretation of Scripture.

§ 6. All this surely requires, as I have said, very clear and strong scriptural authority to establish it. But when we ask for this, we are referred to such a passage as—"This is my body;" which is parallel to many others that every one understands figuratively; as when our Lord is called a Lamb, a Vine, a Shepherd, and a Door; and when He says, in explaining his Parables, "The seed *is* the Word of God;" "The Reapers *are* the Angels;" and the like. Thoroughly familiar as the Disciples must have been with such figurative expressions, it cannot be doubted that they must have so understood Him when He presented to them "bread, saying, this is my body."

If indeed He had not *in person* instituted the Rite, but his Apostles, after his departure, had, under the guidance of the

Holy Spirit, introduced it, using the words, "This is the Lord's body," there might have been perhaps some little danger—though but very little, even so—that some disciples might have supposed a miraculous though invisible change of substance to be meant. But, as if on purpose to guard against this, He Himself began the celebration of the rite; knowing, as He must have known, that the Apostles could not have thought that He was holding his own literal body in his own hands, and giving it to them, but would feel sure that He was speaking of a representation—a symbol—of his body. And to most of them—probably to all—would occur what they had heard from Himself just before, "The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the Spirit that giveth life;" implying—what is of itself evidently reasonable—that the real literal flesh of the human body of the Son of Man, even if it could literally be received by our bodily organs, could not, of itself, and merely as flesh, have any spiritual efficacy as regards the soul.

And accordingly, the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper must be regarded (as I

have elsewhere remarked) as not only a Sign, but a sign of a Sign; being a Sign of his Body and Blood, which are a Sign of "the *Spirit* which quickeneth."

It seems inconceivable, then, that any one of common sense can really doubt that the Apostles understood their Master to be speaking at the last Supper, of the bread and wine as *symbols* of his body broken, and his blood shed, for them. And we may surely presume that, if this their belief had been erroneous, they would have received afterwards, on so important a point, a correction of their mistake, and whatever instruction was needed.

Now, we know from their own writings that they not only received no such correction, but continued in their original belief; since we find Paul, for instance, speaking to the Corinthians of "the *bread* that we break;" besides frequent incidental allusions, in the Book of Acts, to the "breaking of bread" as a well-known and established christian Ordinance.

There can be no doubt then, surely, in any rational mind, that the Apostles did understand literally and not figuratively,

our Lord's injunction, "Do this in remembrance of Me," as what was to be obeyed (as they did obey it) by a real literal partaking of the bread and wine; and that they did understand figuratively and not literally, his words, "This is my body."

Test of literal or figurative Interpretation.

§ 7. Now, the safest test to apply in any case of possible doubt as to the right sense of anything said by our Lord or his Apostles, is, to look to the sense (when we can ascertain it) in which their hearers understood them. And we may fairly presume that, if any mistake were made by those hearers as to the meaning of what was said on some essential point, that mistake would be rectified, and the right explanation given, either immediately or afterwards.

Thus, when the disciples understood Jesus to be speaking literally of the "leaven" of bread, He at once explained to them his real meaning. When He spoke of his resurrection, and they "understood not," but supposed Him to be speak-

ing figuratively, and "reasoned among themselves" what this could mean, his actual resurrection afforded them an explanation. And their belief that the benefits of the Gospel were to be confined to Jews by nature, and those Gentiles who should conform to the Mosaic Law, was a mistake corrected by an express revelation to Peter.

Now, in the present case, no correction was made of the sense in which the Disciples must certainly have understood our Lord's words. And every attentive student of Scripture will remember how earnestly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the oneness of Christ's sacrifice is contrasted with the continually-repeated sacrifices of the Levitical Law; plainly showing that the Eucharist was understood to be, not a fresh sacrifice, but a feast of the one sufficient sacrifice made "once for all," and that the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood, is commemorated, but not repeated.

"This man after He had offered one sacrifice for ever (εις το διηνεκες) then sat down on the right hand of God; . . . for

by one sacrifice He hath perfected for ever (εις το διηνεκες) them that are partakers of sanctification."* And as for our Lord's expression, "my flesh is meat *indeed*" (αληθως), (which is followed in our Church Catechism, which says that his body and blood "are *verily* and indeed received by the faithful,") the Apostles must have understood Him as when He said "I am the *true* vine"—αληθινος—which denoted not his being a vine in the *literal* sense, but in the highest and most *important* sense; even as Paul says that "that is *not* circumcision which is outward in the flesh," (which, *literally*, it clearly is,) but that "circumcision is of the heart;" *i.e.*, in the noblest and best sense.

Errors concerning the Eucharist, not sprung from erroneous Interpretation of Scripture.

§ 8. Among the errors, therefore—and doubtless there are many and great ones—which have arisen from an erroneous interpretation of Scripture, this is, I think, not to be reckoned. It must have arisen from hu-

* Not ηγιασμενους, "them that are sanctified," in the *past* tense, but αγιαζομενους, in the present.

man teaching, *by* pastors, and *to* a people, little acquainted with Scripture, and paying little regard to it. And accordingly the doctrine does not appear to have existed for the first thousand years and more. But when introduced, and prevailing, Scripture was afterwards wrested into a sense that might seem to support it.

And this will always be readily acquiesced in, if done by a Church, which is believed to be the divinely-appointed, infallible guide in all religious matters. It is but lost labour to prove to a man's own judgment that a certain interpretation of Scripture is forced and unnatural, as long as he is fully convinced that he ought implicitly to submit his own judgment to that of his Church. He will acknowledge that there is a mysterious *difficulty*, which it is his duty to disregard; but no valid *objection*.

There are to be found—and probably always will be—persons of such a disposition as to be glad to allow others to think for them, and to relieve them of the responsibility of forming judgments for

themselves. Among Protestants, one may sometimes find the leaders of parties assuming (while they disclaim, in words, all claim to infallibility) the right of deciding for their followers; who cut short all discussion by at once denouncing all who do not agree with that Party, as "not knowing the Gospel," and who take for granted that whatever views on any point are adopted by their Party, are to be received as the undoubted decisions of the Holy Spirit; putting, in reality, though not in words, a (supposed) infallible Party, for an infallible Church.

But it is a remarkable fact, that of the persons who have even gone over to such a Church, a large proportion are of a character the very opposite to that from which most would have anticipated such a result They are persons not distinguished by extreme self-distrust, or a tendency to excessive and unreasonable deference and submissiveness, and a readiness on slight grounds to acquiesce in what is said; but in all respects the very opposite of all this: arrogant, self-confident, wilful, indocile, disdainful of any one who opposes

their views, highly sceptical, and inclined to demand stronger proof of anything they are called on to believe than the case admits of, or than a reasonable man would require. Yet such persons are found yielding to one of the worst-supported claims that ever was set up, and assenting to a long list of most paradoxical propositions, every one of which has a vast mass of evidence against it, and hardly anything that can be called an argument in its favour.

Reaction in favour of blind acquiescence in groundless claims.

§ 9. The case seems to be, that a *re-action* takes place in a mind of this description; and the individual rushes with a vehemence that is quite characteristic, from one extreme to the opposite. He is weary of inquiring, discussing, investigating, answering objections, and forming a judgment on a multitude of separate points, and so resolves to cut short at once all this disquieting fatigue, by accepting implicitly the decisions on all points, of an authority which demands submission, not on the ground of a con-

viction of the understanding, but as an act of the *Will;* commanding us to stifle doubts, and shun inquiry, and set evidence at defiance.

Such is almost the very language of one of the converts in question:—"Don't stand at the door arguing, but enter the great home of the soul—enter, and adore. . . . . Faith ever begins with a *venture*, and is rewarded with sight. . . . Such a person is under no duty to wait for clearer light. He will not have—he cannot expect—clearer light *before conversion.* Certainty in its highest sense is the reward of those who *by an act of the Will,* embrace the Truth, when Nature like a coward shrinks. You must make a venture. Faith is a *Venture*, *before* a man is a Catholic, and a grace after it."*

Such a man is like one who, being the proprietor of some great manufacturing, or commercial, or agricultural concern, becomes weary of looking after a multitude of details in the various departments of the business, and watching the various persons employed in it; and thereupon

* *Loss and Gain.*

resolves to throw the whole superintendence into the hands of an agent, provided with an ample Power-of-Attorney, and entrusted with unlimited control throughout. This may be a very wise course, *supposing* the agent fixed on to be one whom there are good grounds for thus trusting, as thoroughly well qualified both in point of skill and of integrity. But nothing can be a more monstrous absurdity, supposing him fixed on at random, on no grounds but his own boastful and unsupported pretensions, and merely because the proprietor resolved that he *would* fully trust *some* one, and only *one*. He has indeed thus cleared himself of a multitude of responsibilities, but at the risk of a universal and total ruin. And the convert who proceeds in an analogous manner has exchanged a number of questions on this, that, and the other point, for *one*, which, however, comprehends in it all the rest together, and presents a great difficulty, besides, of itself. For he who has adopted a multitude of errors in the lump, on the authority of a guide whom he has no reason to trust, is responsible for all and

each of those errors, and for that of chusing, by a mere act of Will, such a guide, in addition.

A man who adopts this course is likely to obtain ultimately little or nothing of that tranquillity of mind which he had hoped for, and for which he had paid so dear. In proportion as he is intelligent and thoughtful, he will be haunted with the suspicion, "Is there not a lie in my right hand? Was I justified in shutting the eyes God gave me, and giving myself up to be led by a blind guide? Is not the well-compacted fabric of my faith built on a foundation of sand?" And the more he resolves to turn away his thoughts from evidence, and to banish doubts, the more he will feel that there *are* doubts unresolved; and that evidence is against him. A firm determination of the *Will* to believe, he will find to be far different from a real firm belief. And he will probably end—where some, it is likely, have begun—in securing that alone which alone does lie within the reach of Will, a vehement *protestation* of belief, and inculcation of it on others, with a full conviction indeed of

the usefulness of his religion, as a means of influencing the vulgar, and satisfying their craving for some devotional exercise, but with little or no conviction of its truth. If such a person avows that he has maintained what he does not inwardly think, because it was "*necessary for his position*," he may well expect to be believed in that avowal, if in nothing else. And we may feel some suspicion that some of his disciples, who do *not* make that avowal, may be inwardly of the same mind.

Such a state of mind is likely to be fostered — perhaps generated—by some writers of no small popularity in the present day. One of them, deriding and censuring all appeals to evidences of the truth of Christianity, urges men to embrace it merely from "feeling the want of it." He himself at one time embraced Socinianism, and at another German Transcendentalism, from such feelings of *want*. And the "want" of a deliverer from the Roman yoke led the Jews of old to reject the true Christ, and to follow false pretenders.

Again, a reviewer of the life of Gibbon

attributes the historian's infidelity to his study of the evidences of Christianity. And he would have people taught that the truth of the Gospel was never denied by any one!

Another reviewer (of the life of Baxter, in the *Edinburgh*,) tells us—with marvellous ignorance, or trust in the reader's ignorance—that "the Apostles denounced unbelief as sin"—not, as is the fact, because they offered "many infallible proofs," but without any proof at all. And he assures us that inquiry into the Evidences of Christianity is likely to lead to disbelief of it.

That an avowed infidel should say this, is nothing strange; but it is truly wonderful that writers apparently zealous in the cause of Christianity should not perceive that they are defeating their own object, and that a declaration from a *professed believer* that examination of evidence is likely to end in rejection of Christianity, does more to produce infidelity than the most ingenious objections of all the professed unbelievers that exist.

Many, however, of these persons have

not sufficiently considered, and are not fully aware, that *belief* (as well as the passions and feelings) is not directly, but only indirectly, under the control of the Will. It may seem strange to speak of a person's not knowing what it is that he really believes and feels. But it is a point on which men are often mistaken. They often say—without any design to deceive—that they are very glad of this and very sorry for that, when they really feel no joy or sorrow, but think they *ought* so to feel, and resolve that they *will*, and then fancy that they *do*. But in reality, to resolve, or to exhort another, to feel admiration, or contempt, or pity, or love, &c., is as idle as to attempt to add a cubit to one's stature. To make any one feel pity, for instance, we must proceed indirectly, by putting forward and dwelling on the circumstances which tend to excite pity. And so with the rest of the feelings. And it is the same with belief. Men may indeed be brought to believe something on very insufficient grounds: as, for instance, by being vehemently assured of it by some one for whom they have an unde-

served deference. But *some* reason—good or bad—every one must have for his belief, over and above a mere *will* to believe. To convince yourself, or another, of anything, you should, in fairness, proceed, not by resolutions and exhortations, but by putting forward good *reasons* which may produce conviction. And such was the procedure of the Sacred writers. When they called on men to believe, they put before them sufficient evidence to warrant belief, and urged them to listen to that evidence. "The works that I do," said Jesus, "in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."

Ambiguity of the word "Mystery."

§ 10. Such expressions as "sacred mystery," "awfully mysterious," and the like, are often very successfully employed to stifle inquiry where inquiry might be dangerous, and to deter people from examining carefully what it is that they are called on to assent to, and whether the Scriptures do really teach it, or rather contradict it. And the word "Mystery," when erroneously or indistinctly understood, has

contributed, no doubt, both to cherish superstitions in some, and to create groundless terror in others. It was employed by our Reformers—agreeably to a use of the word which is frequent in the New Testament—to denote a *symbol*, emblem, or representation, of one thing by another. And they used it interchangeably with the words "sign" and "sacrament," as may be seen—for instance, in the Twenty-ninth Article. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul speaks of marriage as an emblem,* representing the union of Christ with his Church. And in like manner, in one of the post-communion prayers we speak of those "who have duly received these holy mysteries"—viz., the bread and wine. So also in the baptismal service, we speak of water "sanctified to the *mystical* (*i.e.*, figurative or symbolical) washing away of sin."

But the ordinary colloquial use of the word "mystery" suggests the idea of something obscure and unintelligible; and thus the way is prepared for an inde-

* Μυστηριον; in the Vulgate, "Sacramentum."

finite amount of superstition, and, among others, for superstitious dread and aversion.

On the one hand, in any matter which a man conceives to be quite unintelligible—or unintelligible to *him*—many a one will be disposed to believe and do whatever is solemnly and vehemently urged upon him by his spiritual guides, without presuming to inquire whether there is any ground for such faith and practice. And, on the other hand, anything unintelligibly mysterious, and at the same time connected with something of danger, many a one will be inclined to shrink from with a kind of undefined dread, and not only to avert his thoughts from the subject, but practically to withdraw from having anything to do with it; even as a traveller in some unknown region would dread to pass through a forest which he suspected to abound with beasts of prey and venomous serpents.

But by the word "mystery," as applied to the sacraments, our Reformers (as I have said) understood a symbolical representation. Concerning the efficacy, indeed,

of our Lord's death for Man's redemption, they do not—as is, unhappily, the practice of some—attempt to give explanations beyond what the Scripture-writers have revealed to us. But far as that mystery surpasses—as the most modest and wisest men perceive—the reach of human understanding, the early disciples, when once assured on sufficient authority that the death of Jesus *was* a sacrifice, could have found nothing difficult or strange in the idea of a feast on a sacrifice; since, both in the Jewish and in the heathen sacrifices, they had been accustomed to see the worshippers partake of the victim. And to this custom, as a well-known one, Paul alludes, in writing to the Corinthians.

Sacrificial character of the death of Christ, indicated by the Eucharist.

§ 11. And it is worth observing, that, besides the many distinct and express declarations of the Sacred writers of the sacrificial character of Christ's death, the very institution of the Eucharist was itself sufficient to impress this on men's minds; considering who and

what the persons were to whom these declarations were made. If He had been merely a martyr—the greatest of all martyrs—to the cause of divine truth, it would indeed have been natural that his death should have been in some way solemnly commemorated by the Church; and perhaps by some symbolical commemoration of the *death* itself; but not, by the *eating and drinking* of the symbols of his body and blood. As is well remarked by Bishop Hinds, in one of his works, not only is the bread *broken*, and the wine *poured out* (which might have sufficiently represented the wounding of his body, and the shedding of his blood), but both are *partaken* of by those who celebrate the rite. And this would be an unmeaning and utterly absurd kind of ceremonial in celebrating a mere martyrdom, such as that of Stephen, for instance, or of any other martyr, however eminent. Even if we had not, therefore, such numerous allusions as we find in Scripture, to "Christ our Passover as sacrificed for us," and entering "into the most holy place with his own blood," as a sacrificing priest as

well as a victim,—even if we had much fewer of such statements and allusions than there are—still, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, early and generally established as we know it was, would be a decisive proof that the early Christians must have understood, from the very character of that ordinance itself, that our Lord's death was not a mere martyrdom, but a true sacrifice, similar to—though far surpassing—the expiatory sacrifices which they had been familiar with under the Law; and which we find so often referred to as types of the offering of Christ.

The passages in which such reference is made, and in which the sacrificial character of that death is strongly set forth, are so numerous, and so well known, that it would be superfluous to cite or even to refer to them. We are not called on to receive this doctrine, remote as it is from all the anticipations of human reason, and beyond our powers of explanation, on the strength of two or three slight and oblique hints, capable of equally well bearing either that or some other signification; but the statements of the doctrine, and

allusions to it, in Scripture, are—as might fairly have been expected—numerous, and distinct, and full.

Attempts to explain away the doctrine of the Atonement.

§ 12. But attempts have been made from time to time, and are still being made, to explain all these passages as figures of speech. And this is one of my reasons for now adverting to the subject. What then, it may be asked, is the test by which we are to decide *what* expressions are to be understood literally, and what, figuratively?

The adherents of a supposed infallible Church represent an implicit deference to the decisions of such a Church as the only safeguard against all conceivable wantonness of interpretation; against an indefinite amount of error, from understanding figuratively what is meant to be taken literally, and literally what is not literally meant, according to each man's private judgment, as his own fancy may dictate. And certainly if we could have proof of the existence of any such infallible authority on earth, and also a clear indi-

cation *where* it is lodged, to this guide we should be bound to resort as a safeguard against erroneous interpretations. But in the absence of any such proof, an implicit deference to the interpretations of some earthly guide would be only substituting one man's caprice for another's.

We have, however, in most cases, a very safe guide, by looking to the sense in which the *hearers* of our Lord and his Apostles, understood them. For, as has been already remarked, we may fairly presume that this must have been, in any matter of vital importance, the true sense of what was said, unless a mistake was pointed out and corrected. Thus, as was observed just now, if the Apostles had been mistaken in supposing—as they undoubtedly did—that what Jesus was holding in his hands and distributing to them, was not his own literal body, but a symbolical representation of it, their mistake would have been corrected. Again, our Lord's expression "Son of God," as applied to Himself, is one which might indeed conceivably have borne the meaning of his being merely a highly-favoured pro-

phet. But we know that his judges did understand Him as claiming a divine character; and if this had been a mistake of theirs, we may be sure He would have corrected it; else He would have been bearing false witness concerning Himself.

So also, if all the early Christians had been mistaken in their interpretation of anything that was said concerning our Lord's death, this their error would surely have been removed, and a different explanation given. Now, what they did understand, there can be no rational doubt. The idea of redemption by a sacrifice, however inexplicable, was one with which they were perfectly familiar; and they could never have thought, unless expressly assured of it, that the real literal sacrifices of the Levitical Law were types, not of any real sacrifice, but of a figure of speech; —that "the shadow of good things to come," which that Law contained, was much more substantial than that which it represented. Nor could they (to revert to a former remark), familiar as they were with the idea of a feast upon a sacrifice, have thought that a mere martyrdom was

to be celebrated by eating and drinking the symbols of the martyr's body and blood. The very same test, therefore—the appeal to what must have been *understood at the time*,—serves to guard us against the opposite errors, of understanding figurative expressions literally, and of explaining away as a figure what was meant to be literally understood.

Danger of rash attempts at explanation.

§ 13. As for the latter of these errors, I have no doubt that the attempts of some persons to interpret as mere metaphor all the declarations of Scripture concerning Christ's offering of Himself, have been greatly encouraged, and probably in many instances caused, by unwise and presumptuous endeavours to explain what Scripture has left unexplained, and to confirm what is there revealed to us, by reconciling it with theories of man's devising. For, when objections which at least appear to some to be unanswerable, are brought against any such theory, it is too late to resort to the plea that divine mysteries are beyond

the reach of our understanding, and that we must not venture to try them by the standard of human reason. Every one who brings forward a theory of his own, does in fact appeal to the tribunal of human reason, and binds himself to make his explanation intelligible and satisfactory. And when he fails to do this, the result will too often be that the doctrine itself which he seeks to elucidate and support by his explanations, will be supposed by many to be *dependent* on these, and will be rejected along with the untenable theory.

It is our wiser and safer course, therefore, as well as the more modest and humble, to confine ourselves, in these matters, to the express declarations of the inspired writers, and to warn men against listening to any one who ventures to go beyond these — who presents us with "developments" (as they are sometimes called) that are to fill up the omissions of Scripture, and who is thus in reality setting himself up as knowing more of the divine mysteries than was revealed to the Apostles; or at least more than they

were commissioned to reveal to *us*. An humble, unlearned Christian, of ordinary common sense, may understand that he is guilty of no arrogance in rejecting any such teacher, however learned and ingenious, and that he is bound to do so.

None more learned or more ingenious are the generality of men likely to meet with than Bishop Butler, who thus expresses himself on this subject: "Christ offered Himself a propitiatory sacrifice, and made atonement for the sins of the world. . . . . And this sacrifice was, in the highest degree, and with the most extensive influence, of that efficacy for obtaining pardon of sin, which the heathens may be supposed to have thought their sacrifices, and which the Jewish sacrifices were, in some degree, and with regard to some persons. *How, and in what particular way*, it had this efficacy, there are not wanting persons who have *endeavoured to explain;* but I *do not find that Scripture has* explained it." . . . . Again, "Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what Scripture has authorized;

others, probably *because they could not explain* it, have been for *taking it away*, and confining his office of Redeemer of the world, to his instruction, example, and government of the Church; whereas the doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that he taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy it is, by what He did and suffered for us . . . . And it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions on which it is offered, on *our* part, without disputing how it was procured, on his."

Such is the sober statement of that truly great theologian, in his *Analogy*.* He was one who sought to know no *less*, and was *content* to know no *more*, of divine mysteries inscrutable to Man's Reason, than the inspired writers tell us; and he guarded against the error of those presumptuous speculators, who, when the illumination from Heaven—the rays of Revelation—fail to shed such full light as they wish for, on the Gospel dispensation,

* Part II., c. 5.

are for bringing to the dial-plate the lamp of human philosophy.

And it is important that it should be clearly perceived, how much allied are the two opposite errors alluded to by Bishop Butler. It is a similar want of humble faith that leads one party to reject what they find it impossible to explain, and the other, to resolve to find an explanation of what they admit.

Faith shown by contented ignorance of divine mysteries.

§ 14. These latter, even if their explanations were really as satisfactory as, to themselves, they may appear, and if they did possess some knowledge beyond that of the Apostles—or beyond, at least, what the Apostles have imparted to us—yet could not, on that ground, claim the virtue of *faith*. For faith, it is plain, is to be measured rather by our ignorance than by our knowledge. Some knowledge, indeed, there must be, as a *foundation* for any intelligent faith to rest on; but the province of the faith itself, distinct from the basis on which it is built, must be that which we do *not* clearly understand.

For, "faith is the evidence of things not seen." There would be no exercise of faith in assenting to truths which are plainly demonstrated to our Reason, or in obeying commands whose reasonableness was clearly perceived. Faith—as distinguished from blind credulity—is shown, in taking the word of another whom we have good reason to rely on, for something which we do *not* clearly see or fully understand. Any one who in a dark night, at sea, believes, on the Pilot's word, that the ship is approaching the haven, shows more faith in that Pilot than others who fancy that they see the land before them. He may be convinced that they are deceiving themselves, and are gazing on a fog-bank, which they mistake for land; but, at any rate, they cannot claim superior or equal *faith* to his.

We cannot, perhaps, better illustrate this truth—which, evident as it is, is often overlooked—than by referring to the trial made of Abraham, whose pre-eminently-confident trust in God is so strongly dwelt on in Scripture. His trial was quite different (and this is some-

times strangely overlooked) from what a similar command would have been to another man—to Noah, for instance, or to Moses—because, as is remarked in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the command was seemingly at variance with the promise he had received, that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called;" but "he trusted that God was able to restore him even from the dead;" and his faith and obedience were rewarded by the blessing pronounced; on which occasion doubtless it was, when he did receive his son from the dead in a figure [parabolè] that he "saw the day of Jesus, and was glad." But if he had known beforehand how the transaction was to end, there would have been no trial of his faith, and no pre-eminent virtue in his obedience. He had the knowledge, indeed, on which his faith was based—the knowledge that he had received a promise, and also a command which appeared to nullify that promise; but how the two were to be reconciled, he was left ignorant till the trial was completed; and it was in his firm trust in the promise, and ready compliance with the command,

while in that ignorance, that the virtue of his faith consisted.

Abraham's faith to be imitated.

§ 15. Such, then—we may plainly see,—is the example held out by Scripture for our imitation, of the faith of Abraham. If Abraham, instead of prompt and trustful compliance with the command, had set himself to devise interpretations of it, or demanded an explanation, he would have bewildered himself in presumptuous conjectures, and have forfeited the blessing. He had received a promise, and also a command seemingly at variance therewith, from One whom he had good reason fully to trust; and he saw that it was his part not to raise questions about a divine command, but to obey it. Even thus, a dutiful and affectionate child of a wise and kind parent will say, "My father tells me to do so and so, and his will is reason enough for *me*. Doubtless there *are* good reasons, though unknown to me, for his command; and these he may perhaps hereafter explain to me; but, in the mean time, it is my duty to obey."

Such a child, we should observe, does not presume to pronounce that his father *has* no reason for his command, except that such is his pleasure; which would be to attribute to him caprice. On the contrary, he doubts not that there *is* good reason, both for giving the command, and for withholding the explanation of it. That such is the father's will, would be no good reason, to the father, for *giving* the command, but is a sufficient reason, to the child, for *obeying* it. For the child, therefore, to insist on it that his father *had* no reasons, except his own will, for what he does, because he has not seen fit to make those reasons known, would be, not humility, but the height of rash presumption.*

* "Those," says Calvin (and the same language is to be found in the writings of many of his followers, and of Augustine's) "whom God passes by, He condemns; and that, for *no cause whatever, except* that He CHUSES to exclude them from the inheritance" ["neque *alia de causa* nisi quod illos VULT excludere."]

This is called by such writers setting forth the divine "sovereignty;" and yet there is not even any earthly sovereign who would not feel himself insulted by having it said or insinuated, that, when he announces, "our will and pleasure is" so and so, he had, himself, no reason at all for the command issued, except that such was his will and pleasure.

And we ought, no less, to trust, as no doubt Abraham did, that the Most High has good reasons, even when not revealed to us, for all His dealings with mankind.

Why, and how, it was necessary that the innocent blood should be shed for Man's redemption, we know no more—at least, from what the Scriptures tell us—than Abraham did, why he was commanded to offer up his son. And if we are asked how we know that this sacrifice was necessary, we should answer, because the Scriptures assure us that it did take place. It must, therefore, have been necessary, under the actual circumstances. We have no right to frame any metaphysical theories to prove that this necessity *would* have existed under any other, quite different, or even opposite circumstances. The actual state of things was, we know, that the majority of the Jewish nation refused to receive Jesus as the Christ; it being plainly the divine decree that they should not be compelled to receive Him against their will, by external force. And they thereupon condemned Him to death. We have no right to maintain that his death

would have been necessary under the opposite supposition of a universal acceptance of his claims. On the contrary, we are expressly told by the inspired writers, "I wot that *through ignorance* ye did it; as did also your Rulers." (Acts iii.) "*Because* they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." "For if the princes of this world had known the wisdom of God, they *would not* have crucified the Lord of Glory." (1 Cor. ii.)

"It may be needful," (says Bishop Butler, in a note,) "to mention, that several questions which have been brought into the subject before us, and determined, are not in the least entered into here; questions which have been, I fear, rashly determined, and perhaps with equal rashness, contrary ways. For instance, Whether God *could* have saved the world by other means than the death of Christ, consistently with the general laws of his government? And had not Christ come into the world, what would have been the future condition of the better sort of men . . . .? The meaning of the first of

these questions is greatly ambiguous; and neither of them can be answered, without going upon that infinitely absurd position, that we know the whole of the case. And perhaps the very inquiry, *What would have followed if God had not done as He has?* may have in it some impropriety."*

Christ's Ministers, then, are bound to warn his people against mistaking for a pre-eminent faith what is rather a deficiency of faith, and, for humility, what is in reality presumptuous rashness; and against being misled either by those who frame theories to explain what Scripture has left unexplained, or by those who, finding such theories untenable, reject what Scripture does assure us of.†

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* *Anal.*, b. ii. c. 5.

† But seek not thou to understand
The deep and curious lore
With which full many a reckless hand
Has gloss'd these pages o'er.

Wait till He shall Himself disclose
Things now beyond thy reach;
But listen not, my child, to those
Who the Lord's secrets teach;

§ 16. And the same really humble, unhesitating, submissive, and practical faith which we are required to have in the atoning Sacrifice of the Son of God, the same is called for in reference to that Feast on his sacrifice which we celebrate in the Eucharist; the Ordinance which, as was just now observed, is not only a *commemoration* of his death, but also a strong confirmation of its *sacrificial* character. The numerous and distinct declarations, indeed, to that effect, of the Sacred Writers, would alone afford sufficient grounds for the conviction of the understanding; but it has seemed good to divine Wisdom that we should not be left to search out passages of Scripture, and on these alone lay down the doctrine as a well-established Article of our Creed, but that we should moreover be continually reminded of it by the often-repeated cele-

Practical Faith, in reference to the Eucharist.

Who teach thee more than He has taught,
Tell more than He revealed,
Preach tidings which He never brought,
And read what He left sealed.

Bp. HINDS'S *Poems.*

bration of a Rite which clearly implies the doctrine, and forcibly impresses it on the mind.

And as with respect to the doctrine itself, so also as to the Ordinance, which is a Seal and a Monument of it, men have fallen into corresponding faults. While some have presumed—as was observed at the beginning—to frame theories not warranted by Scripture, others have been led, partly from that very cause, to reject or very much to neglect the Ordinance itself. Fanciful speculations respecting the nature of Substance and Accidents tend naturally to cast a discredit, in the minds of the rash and unthinking, on a divine Institution, which has been thus deformed by an admixture of human devices; just as rash attempts at explanation of revealed mysteries that are quite beyond human reason, have led to the rejection, along with the human theories, of the doctrines themselves which are revealed. Anything quite alien from all notions of natural Reason, it is allowable to regard so far with distrust, as to require that it should be fully established by a sufficient Scrip-

ture-proof; and if not so established, we do well to reject it. But if it does appear to be plainly declared in Scripture, it then becomes a reasonable and suitable trial of our faith. Reason itself would pronounce that there must be much in the counsels of the Most High that is beyond the reach of Reason; and that positive commands respecting things originally indifferent, must justly claim obedience when coming from lawful authority. For if we are to believe merely what we can fully understand and explain, and to do merely what appears to natural conscience to be a duty, independently of any command, this would be to make the word of our divine Master go for nothing.

Natural and Positive Duties.

§ 17. But it is remarkable that we may sometimes find even the very same persons objecting to what Scripture reveals or enjoins, unless they can see reason for it independent of Scripture, and yet expecting to find in Scripture what is not contained in it—exact precepts for every point of moral conduct.

One may sometimes find persons pleading, when they wish to evade some moral [*i.e.*, natural] duty, that there is no injunction as to this or that in the Bible;—that so and so is nowhere forbidden in Scripture; as if we had no Moral Faculty, and were to expect in Scripture a distinct and complete enumeration of things to be done and avoided, instead of the general precept, "*Whatsoever* things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and honest, and of good report, to think on those things."*

And then, again, some, and perhaps the very same persons, when positive precepts are in question, will ask what efficacy there can be in a sprinkling with water, or in partaking of bread and wine. Why, if these did possess any such natural efficacy as we know our ordinary food has for sustaining the natural life, there would be no trial of our obedient faith in doing what the Lord commands, simply on the ground of that command. If the water of

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* See *Lessons on Morals*, L. ii.; and also *A Charge* (1854) *on Christian Moral Instruction.*

the pool of Siloam had been some medicinal spring that had the natural virtue to cure blindness, the blind man would have given no proof of faith in using it. But if, because there was no such virtue, he had refused to do what he was told—or if, like Naaman the Syrian, he had claimed a preference for some other waters—he would have remained blind.

But with respect to this point—I mean the distinction between what are called moral [*i.e.*, natural] duties, and positive duties,—things commanded because they are right, and things right because commanded,—there exists in many minds a strange confusion of thought. Any one who makes inquiries on the subject, for the first time, of those around him, will be surprised to find the extent to which this confusion prevails, even among persons not uneducated, nor, generally, deficient in intelligence.* And if we take occasion

* The well-known "Assembly of Divines" at Westminster were men whom even those who are far from accepting their dogmas, would not consider as destitute of intelligence or of learning. Yet on this point they seem to have been utterly abroad.

from time to time to put before our people such explanations as may guard them against these indistinct and confused notions on the subject, our labour will not have been superfluous or ill-applied.

Groundless Scruples.

§ 18. Far the greatest number, however, are kept back from the Lord's Table by a kind of misdirected reverential feeling of dread lest they should be "unworthy" partakers; as supposing that the ordinance is designed for those only who have attained to a certain perfection in holiness beyond what is required of Christians generally. But they should be reminded, that the unworthiness which the Apostle, and which our Reformers refer to, is a *careless and irreverent* partaking; a fault which in former times appears to have been prevalent; while in our own, a far different and rather opposite kind of error is the one most to be guarded against. It will not be difficult to explain to any one who is really influenced by conscientious scruples, that, though it is true there would be sinful profanation in coming to the Lord's

Table thoughtlessly, and without any sincere devotion, the same may be said of *all* divine *worship*, and of the receiving of *religious instruction*, and of the *perusal of the Scriptures*. All these are duties, and so is the receiving of the Lord's Supper: and *all* these duties men ought to practise, *voluntarily*, *sincerely*, and heartily. We ought to be far from wishing to *compel* any one (supposing that were in our power) either to attend the Lord's Table, or to read the Bible, or to do *any* of these things, against his will; or from urging him to go through the outward acts when his heart did not accompany them. But we should exhort men to pray and strive for those real sincere feelings of devotion which alone can make those acts well-pleasing to God.

And in confirmation of anything we ourselves may urge, when seeking to allay groundless scruples, we have the advantage of being able to direct the attention of our hearers to the written words of the Communion Service itself, which disclaims all trust in our own righteousness—all meritorious "worthiness to gather up the

crumbs of the Lord's Table." And we should remind them also of the words of the Catechism respecting what is required of those who partake of this Sacrament. It can be easily explained to any one who is sincerely well disposed, that it is not the *communicant* alone, but every Christian who would hope for God's favour, that is required to "examine himself whether he repent him truly of his former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, and to have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and to be in charity with all men." Preparation for the Lord's Table, therefore, he can easily be brought to perceive, is the same as preparation for the whole christian life, and for a christian death, and for a joyful resurrection. The communicant, consequently, does not take on himself any new obligation that did not lie on him before. He will, indeed, be the more *likely* to lead a christian life, from his availing himself of the appointed means of grace; but the *obligation* to lead such a life is absolute and complete already. And it would be a manifest

absurdity to imagine that a happy immortality could be attained on some different and easier terms by those who withdraw from the Lord's Table; that a refusal to comply with one of his commandments would exempt men from obedience to the rest of them. Any one, therefore, who deems himself not good enough to receive this Sacrament, and accordingly absents himself, waiting till he shall become better prepared, is acting as the prodigal son in the parable would have done, if, instead of arising at once to go to his father, he had waited till he should be in a more prosperous condition; when it was his father only that could supply food and raiment to the destitute returning outcast.

All this being what hardly any one would deliberately deny, it is found accordingly that most of the non-communicants have a design to communicate at some future time, before their death. And they seem to suppose that he who shall have done this, will have sufficiently complied with our Lord's injunction. We find many a one, accordingly, who needs to be earnestly and repeatedly reminded that

every time he refuses the invitation to partake of the Lord's Supper, he is committing a fresh sin—a distinct act of disobedience to his divine Master. And, therefore, instead of preparing himself to be a more "meet partaker" of the heavenly feast, he is habitually alienating himself more and more from his Saviour, by thus resisting, time after time, his repeated calls.

Others again, and not a few, we meet with, who do present themselves at the Lord's Table on some solemn occasions of rare recurrence, and who consider this as absolutely preferable to an habitual and frequent attendance, from finding that their devotional feelings are more strongly excited by a celebration that takes place at long intervals. But they should be reminded that (though this is undoubtedly true) if they were to act on such a consideration throughout, they would discontinue daily prayer, and habitual attendance on all public worship; since these would certainly more strongly affect the feelings if they were of very rare occurrence. But the object to be aimed

at is, not an occasional, fervid, and probably transitory emotion, but an habitual, effectual, and lasting influence on the whole character, and daily life;—not a passing gleam of enthusiasm, but a steady daylight that shall enlighten our path and guide our steps.

Connexion of Confirmation with the Eucharist.

§ 19. Such errors as I have adverted to we are often the best able to combat in private conversations, adapted to the peculiar habits of thought and tone of feeling of each individual. And of all the occasions for doing this, none can be more suitable than that of preparing young persons for the Rite of Confirmation. For, the earlier any erroneous notions are counteracted, the less is the danger of their leading to an inveterate practical habit. It is of great importance, therefore, that those confirmed should have the earliest possible opportunity of attending at the Lord's Table, and should be earnestly pressed to avail themselves of it at once. And this will tend to correct the mistake (above noticed), which is sometimes to be

met with even in religious parents, of imagining that a young person may be unfit, in point of religious knowledge or of feeling, for receiving the Eucharist, and yet fit to be presented for Confirmation. It may easily be explained to them that, as this is manifestly a groundless notion, at variance with all reason, so it is no less at variance with the decisions of our Church. That all the members of the Church should be Communicants, is not only in many places implied, but is expressly laid down in a Rubric. And the only limitation given of this word "*all*" is, where it is enacted that those only shall come to the holy Table who have "been *confirmed*, or are ready and desirous to be confirmed;" which plainly implies that at least all who *have* been confirmed are bound to attend that Table. This should be carefully impressed on the minds of the people. And, universally, we should use all the means in our power for removing every obstacle, of whatever kind, to that full and frequent attendance at the Lord's Table which our Reformers, in conformity with apostolic usage, manifestly

designed.* The great length of the entire Church-Service, when the Eucharist is administered, probably tends to foster the notion, that our Reformers—since they could not have designed anything physically impossible—could not have meant that *all* the parishioners should be regular communicants. In some populous parishes accordingly there is, several times in a year, an early celebration, at which the Communion-Service alone is used. And this, besides other advantages, tends to do away that notion just alluded to.

We may cherish a hope then—a hope in some degree fortified by experience—that by sedulously availing ourselves of such occasions as I have been adverting to, we may at least somewhat diminish that great and crying evil, the open practical neglect by a large proportion of our congregations, of an acknowledged duty: an evil which the truly pious must have often contemplated both with grief for the individuals, and with shame on account of

* On another point connected with the same subject, there are some remarks in *Bishop Copleston's Remains*.

the scandal it brings on our Church. At any rate, let no exertions be wanting on our part to set before our people what their duty is, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; so that *we*, at least, may not be chargeable with neglecting our own duty, and may be "pure from the blood of all men."

THE END.

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